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DIALOGUES

CONCERNING

NATURAL RELIGION

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DIALOGUES

CONCERNING

NATURAL RELIGION

BY

DAVID HUME

REPRINTED WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY

BRUCE M'EWEN, D.PHIL.

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INTRODUCTION.

IN professing to call attention to this often forgotten work of the great Scottish philosopher, one cannot help noticing how very similar the reception accorded to it by the outside world has been to its treatment at the hands of the author himself. During his lifetime he kept it in the safe obscurity of his study drawer, where it lay until the day of his death. The plan of the Dialogues had been clearly thought out by Hume as early as 1750, and the active period of his contribution to philosophy proper having closed almost in the same year, this excursion of his into natural theology might most fitly have been presented to his readers at once, especially if, as it seems to us now, it may be rightly regarded as the crown and consummation of his earlier speculations. Indeed some such

conception of the relation of the Dialogues to his other works underlies the outlining of his scheme upon its first page, where he founds his method "on the saying of an ancient [Chrysippus], That students of philosophy ought first to learn Logics, then Ethics, next Physics, last of all the nature of the Gods."

From that year onwards, however, his literary activity was directed into other and less speculative channels, and though the book undoubtedly existed in manuscript, and was from time to time submitted to his philosophical friends for their opinion, it was as good as lost for the estimating of his whole position by his contemporaries. In the inner circle of savants, who were vaguely aware of its existence, considerable fear prevailed as to what approaching cataclysm the appearance of the "terrible David" upon the theological horizon might portend; and as year after year passed safely by, their distrust of the threatened publication of his meaning only increased the more. When a book has such a history behind it, there is naturally every reason to expect that its contents may have been varied considerably by corrections, omissions, and insertions from

the author's own hand. But provided always that the manuscript copy (now preserved in the library of the Royal Society of Edinburgh) from which it was first published in 1779, was the original draft, there can have been only the most trivial amendments, and the main lines of the argument were left untouched, Mr Hill Burton's verdict¹ on this point is that, "while the sentiments appear to be substantially the same as when they were first set down, the alterations in the method of announcing them are a register of the improvements in their author's style for a period apparently of twenty-seven years." From what I have seen of the manuscript I should say, first, that the alterations upon the face of it are largely verbal; and secondly, that this particular copy is of later date than that which Hume invited his friend, Sir Gilbert Elliott, to criticise in 1751.

The question whether the whole work was ever substantially recast in the years during which Hume kept it by him cannot be definitely answered here. If, however, in at least one letter, the author asks for assistance and advice in the endeavour to

¹ Life of Hume, i. 328.

render the argument on one side or the other "quite formal and regular," the possibility of a more or less thorough redaction having taken place must not be overlooked.¹ So much is certain, that by retaining the book unpublished he had opportunity of bringing it to a higher pitch of perfection, and that, accordingly, its sentiments may safely be regarded as the mature expression of his religious and theological opinions in strict accordance with his empirical philosophy.

The motive that prevailed with him to hinder publication seems to have been a strong sense of the incompleteness of his arguments, and, more particularly, the feeling often voiced by him that he had not done justice to that "genuine Theism, the most agreeable reflection which it is possible for human imagination to suggest." He speaks of the "natural propensity of the mind" towards the theistic argument from design in terms as warm as those of Kant, who called it the "oldest, the clearest argument, and most in conformity with the common reason of humanity." He had played the sceptic too long in the public eye to care

¹ Dugald Stewart's Works, i. 603.

very much for the popular verdict, or to share his friends' fear that he might incur increasing odium and obloquy. He knew that any orthodox conclusions he could offer in this theological essay of his would appear to zealous defenders of the faith only as Greek gifts; any that might seem in the light of current opinions to be unorthodox could make him no new enemies. His abstract speculations on the logical methods of reason had ended in his advocating "a *mitigated* scepticism," or, as it is also designated, "an academical philosophy,"¹ and when himself was forced to become the pioneer cultivator of the broad field of human knowledge with the untried implement which he had long chosen for his own, the promise of a harvest of positive results seems to have been difficult of realisation. Whether Hume feared that the Dialogues would offend his readers need not be discussed when we know, beyond doubt, that they disappointed his own expectations. Many an *opus magnum* has been utterly lost to the history of literature from considerations exactly similar to those which weighed heavily upon Hume.

¹ Enquiry, XII., iii.

So much is conjecture, but whatever the reason may have been, publication was delayed until death overtook the author in 1776. In his will it was found that careful directions were given, first to Adam Smith, Professor of Moral Philosophy in Glasgow, and afterwards by a codicil to William Strahan, Publisher in London, to secure the bringing of the book to the light—a sum of £200 being set aside for the necessary expenses. Both these gentlemen were so much averse to accepting the charge, that finally Hume's nephew, as residuary legatee, took it in hand. "His testamentary injunction directing their publication was declined by Adam Smith. But it was too peremptory not to be obeyed by a kinsman whom he had in some measure adopted."¹ And so in 1779 these long matured Dialogues at last became part of the common inheritance of philosophers.

It is not necessary in this present Introduction to give either particular or general details of Hume's life and philosophy; enough has been said to show how precarious a chance of existence this posthumous literary child of his had, and how tedious the labour was

¹ Edinburgh Review, lxxxv. 4.

that gave it birth. And the place it was to take in the history of philosophy subsequent to 1779 was entirely in accordance with its past.

The first edition, appearing early in that year from the press of Robinson in London, was rapidly followed by another reprint, with corrections. In 1788 the book was appended to a new edition of Hume's collected Essays printed for Cadell and Elliot, and thereafter it has been frequently republished along with these or other parts of his writings. As a separate work it has appeared once in England, in 1875, when it was used as one of a series of brochures issued privately in London by a Mr T. Scott in the interests of a Society of Free-thinkers. It is not too much to say that, with the exception of this reprint, unworthy in itself, and by reason of the strongly biassed remarks which introduce it "to the reading public," it has been completely ignored by those who have undertaken to supply English libraries of the past century with ready means of access to Hume's far-reaching speculations. In the standard edition of Hume's Works by Green and Grose the only analytic notice of the Dialogues is contained in one singularly unsatisfactory

sentence:¹ "Although perhaps the most finished of its author's productions, it has not excited general attention. There seems to be a deep-seated reluctance to discuss such fundamental questions." This curt dismissal of the Dialogues constitutes a verdict upon students of Hume rather than upon their master, but as a verdict it has ample justification in history. In England it has been generally felt that there is pressing need of an "answer to Hume" in this particular connection, but the temper of the early nineteenth century inclined to be impatient of such a thorough investigation of the deepest principles of natural theology as was necessary after the sifting criticism to which they had been subjected by the great Scottish sceptic. The watch-dogs of the orthodox temple often bark at friends as well as foes; and to express sympathy with the sentiments of Hume, even those admittedly unanswerable, was to incur popular suspicion such as always clings to the name of inquiry. In works professing to be animated with the genuine positive spirit, the easy, well-worn way of dealing with Hume's theology has been to rank his speculations as a side issue, to dub

¹ Vol. iii. p. 80 (1898).

them "Absolute Agnosticism" or "Universal Scepticism," and the reader, having been safely conducted up to the end of this philosophical cul-de-sac, is invited to retrace his steps and pursue his light-hearted journey by some other route.

The attack upon the Dialogues we shall have to consider later, but the curious reader may observe here of the timorous method of grappling with Hume's problems, that it prevails as much with his friends as his foes. Thus in 1818 a series of "Dialogues on Natural and Revealed Religion," with the avowed object of defending, supplementing, and enlarging the conclusions of Hume on principles similar to his, was advertised to appear in 'Blackwood's Magazine'¹ for the month of April. These Dialogues are represented as being conducted by the same Cleanthes, Philo, and Demea who figure in Hume's work. The anonymous author is described (falsely) as one "who died in youth, not without high distinction among his contemporaries." His papers have come into the editor's hands, and it is promised that their publication "shall be continued regularly through twelve numbers of the Magazine."

¹ Blackwood, 1818: April and May.

Only two parts had appeared, when, on account of the uneasiness they caused, the editor saw fit to retract his promise, and, without one word of explanation or apology to his readers, their place in the next issue of the periodical was filled up with other matter. Twelve years later the subterfuge of anonymity was cast aside, and the Rev. Dr Robert Morehead¹ published these supplementary dialogues complete in book form, with his own name on the title-page.

¹ 'Dialogues on Natural and Revealed Religion,' by Robert Morehead, D.D., Edin., 1830. (In twelve parts: Nos. I. and II. almost literally from 'Blackwood,' April and May 1818.) This book deserves notice as a good commentary upon Hume's Dialogues, the only attempt of the kind known to the present writer. The scope of the argument from design is greatly extended. To the data allowed by Hume there are added as evidencing design "the laws of the procedure of the knowing mind as well as the laws visible in creation," "the formation of general notions and associations," and even the bare facts of what Dr Morehead calls "external perception." While with Hume there is evidence for the "natural attributes" of God and little or none for the moral, the Philo and Cleanthes of this later book are made to agree "to lay the foundations of the argument for the moral attributes of the Divine Nature in the moral perceptions of the human mind." A few years later further Dialogues appeared from the same pen, but their tone is entirely apologetic and not at all convincing.

When Hume's *Dialogues* appeared in 1779 his philosophy had already found many admirers in Germany and interrupted other slumbers than those of Kant. To quite a large circle of thinkers there this posthumous book was an unexpected but most welcome revelation. One in particular, Professor Ernst Platner, afterwards best known for his pungent criticisms of the Kantian doctrines, undertook a translation into the German language immediately, and published it with the explanation that it had been forwarded to him anonymously in 1781. The air of mystery so unfortunately associated with this book was increased by his following it in 1783 with a *Discourse on Atheism*,¹ which is intended to mitigate the consequences of his translation. In the meantime another translation of importance in the history of philosophy had been prepared by J. A. Hamann. From his correspondence with his publisher we learn that it² was begun on 21st July 1780 and finished on 8th August.

¹ *Gespräch über den Atheismus*, E. Platner, 1783. The preface runs: The occasion of this Dialogue is the publication of Hume's *Dialogues*: its intention, to provide a reply and perhaps to reply to atheism generally.

² Hamann's *Schriften*, edited by Roth, 1821-43, vi. 158.

About this time, too, he heard of the other intended translation, and the news caused him to delay. Before September, however, of 1780, the manuscript of this translation had been submitted to Kant, who was greatly struck with it and urged the sending of it to press at once.¹ As time went on he wrote deploring its non-appearance, but now Hamann had taken fright at the prospect of his name being connected with such an infidel book, and after suggesting one or two fanciful descriptions of himself for the title-page, he finally intimated to Kant his withdrawal, because he felt another was undertaking "the difficult, dangerous, and unpopular task." Only a few days after the passing of this correspondence Kant began the composition of his 'Critique of Pure Reason,' and through the history of this suppressed manuscript, taken in conjunction with Kant's express references to the Dialogues in the Prolegomena,² the historical connection between Hume's 'Sceptical Theology' and the famous criticism of 'Rational Theology' in the Transcendental Dialectic of the great Critique is thoroughly well established. In this latter

¹ Hamann, vi. 190.

² Prolegomena, §§ 57, 58, 59, *et passim*.

we shall see how a great many of Hume's positions are restated and his conclusions accepted according to Kant's understanding of them,—only, however, to be circumvented in the peculiar fashion of his new philosophy. And although Kant's reconstruction of theology be considered ever so unsatisfactory, it is because of the thorough way in which he and Hume before him had cleared the ground and showed men the "real point at issue"¹ that the philosophy of either became the starting-point for theistic speculation in the subsequent century and a half. Therefore, just as it is possible in Germany for a cry to be raised from time to time of a "return to Kant," so in Scotland there is always opportunity for a return to Hume.² The result in the two cases will always be widely different, for this reason, that the Copernican revolution in thought, initiated by Kant, makes it possible to break entirely with the past. It opened up the way to a brilliant series of speculative deductions in metaphysics and theology which all proceed

¹ Kant and Hume compared in this respect. Flint's *Theism*, p. 389.

² The question in Germany is, *Was uns Kant sein kann?* The popular question in English refers to the past rather than the present, *What has Hume been?*

alike upon one and the same method—namely, a mapping out of the different spheres of consciousness, moral or theoretical, cognitive or religious, as the case may be.

With the ‘Critique of Pure Reason’ an epoch begins for philosophy, in which every such investigation into the problems of natural theology as is contained in the Dialogues is at once pronounced to be incapable of producing any fruit, and the whole argument appears as a beating of the empty air of illusion. But however closely every positive result for theology may be whittled down before the edge of Hume’s scepticism, he still stops short of Kant’s Transcendentalism just in refusing to make that distinction in our cognitive faculties which places theology on a different plane from all other knowledge, and enables Kant to dismiss the question in its older form on the ground of its being misconceived and insoluble, even while in the same moment he addresses himself to its solution under his own restatement. Hume is concerned merely to sift the results of natural theology on his own principles, and not to enter upon what Kant, in contrasting his own treatment of the theological Idea with the Dialogues, calls “a careful

critique guarding the bounds of our reason with respect to its empirical use and setting limits to its pretensions." To be sure, Hume's work limits the results of such use strictly enough; but Kant limits the use itself by denying it in theology altogether.

It is true that one of the interlocutors in the Dialogues contends directly for the inadequacy of human reason to the apprehension of God's Being.¹ But this, the extreme position, is attributed it seems designedly to the weakest of the three disputants, and it would be hermeneutically impossible to read the whole book as if it led up to an absolute negation in this form. For although, with the exception of the argument in the Dialogues, Hume does almost nothing to illustrate at length his already expressed idea of that system of "Divinity or Theology" which he would save from the flames when running over the libraries of the past, he prescribes the conditions of such a system in words which are

¹ Demea: "The nature of God, I affirm, from the infirmities of human understanding, to be altogether incomprehensible and unknown to us;" "The infirmities of our nature do not permit us to reach any ideas which in the least correspond to the ineffable sublimity of the divine attributes."

perfectly definite, and which there is no good reason to regard otherwise than as sincere.¹ "It has a foundation in *reason* so far as it is supported by experience; but its best and most solid foundation is *faith* and divine revelation." It is only in strict accordance with the first of these conditions that in this later work of his we expect to find an honest endeavour to determine how great or how small is the residuum of theological truth to which Hume will admit that the natural reason working within the sphere of experience can attain. The second, again shadowed forth in its closing lines, remains altogether unfulfilled, and indeed the appeal to faith and revelation, which he more than once voices in passages where scepticism seems to hold undisputed sway over his formal reasonings on theological subjects, must only be taken to express just such "a natural sentiment" or "propensity" of feeling as may always maintain its place in the clearest mind along with an utterly opposed conviction of the understanding. The inconsistency from a logical point of view may be admitted by others; it may be explicitly present with the

¹ Enquiry, iv. 135.

author in person as it probably was with Hume.¹ But if that be so, it can hardly be set down as a futile concession to popular orthodoxy, least of all in the Dialogues, and it remains a fact to be reckoned with seriously in any comprehensive estimate of Hume's opinions. Still, in the book itself the action of the dialogue proper stands altogether apart from this short, ill-defined, and perhaps misleading reference to faith and a "revelation" of some sort beyond; it is a plain, painstaking attempt on Hume's part to discover what reasoned foundation, if any, he could allow for religion.

The literary form into which the argument is cast—that of dialogue—though once a favourite method of conveying philosophical instruction, has not always been imitated successfully in later times. Two reasons are stated by Hume for its adoption in the treatment of his subject: first, that the conversational method sheds a variety of lights upon a truth "so obvious," "so certain," and "so important" as

¹ Enquiry, iv. 154, on Faith as a miracle "which subverts all the principles of a man's understanding and gives him a determination to believe what is most contrary to custom and experience."

that of "the Being of a God"; second, that it allows the utmost play to opposing sentiments in dealing with questions so obscure, doubtful, and uncertain as those of His nature and attributes. Both reasons can easily be illustrated and paralleled from numerous passages in Hume's writings. In the Dialogues all parties to the argument agree in holding that of the existence of God there is no question whatever. Even the sceptical Philo, following Lord Bacon, compares the atheists of his time unfavourably with David's fool, who said in his heart, "There is no God," for they are not contented to say it in their hearts, but they also utter that impiety with their lips, and are thereby guilty of multiplied indiscretion and imprudence. "Such people, though they were ever so much in earnest, cannot methinks be very formidable."¹ After the same fashion the friend "who loves sceptical paradoxes," and takes the burden of maintaining the antitheistic argument in Hume's Enquiry, says,² "The chief or sole argument for a divine existence (which I never questioned) is derived from the order of nature." In a private letter as early as 1744

¹ Dialogues, Part II.

² Works, iv. 112.

he had defined his conception of religion as being,¹ "The practice of morality and the assent of the understanding to the proposition that God exists." That may be culpably scanty as a definition, but in all his writings, without exception, this one proposition is always adhered to and often affirmed to be, in Hume's view, a possibly sufficient foundation for religion. For example, in a comparison of historical religions he says, "The only point of theology in which we shall find a consent of mankind almost universal, is that there is invisible intelligent power in the world."² This last quotation rounds off the other references by introducing a new point of view; but many other parallel passages drawn from Hume's writings might be used to show how firmly rooted is his purpose of making no question of the Being of a God. The theory of existence which underlies them all was first propounded in the 'Treatise of Human Nature': "'Tis evident that all reasonings from causes or effects terminate in conclusions concerning matter of

¹ Burton's Life, i. 162.

² Natural History of Religion, sect. 4; cf. also sect. 15, "The universal propensity to believe in invisible intelligent power."

fact: that is, concerning the existence of objects or of their qualities. 'Tis also evident that the idea of existence is nothing different from the idea of any object, and that when after the simple conception of anything we would conceive it as existent, we in reality make no addition to or alteration on our first idea. Thus, when we affirm that God is existent we simply form the idea of such a being as He is represented to us. . . . When I think of God, when I think of Him as existent, and when I believe Him to be existent, my idea of Him neither increases nor diminishes."¹ In thus distinguishing all other attributes from the one attribute of existence on the ground that the latter is no new or distinct idea in the object, Hume may be understood to

¹ Works, i. 394, 395. The word God occurs twice in the text of the whole Treatise,—in the two sentences given above,—and once in a note. The phrases Deity, Divine Being, and Supreme Being are used only in discussing the Cartesian certainty of perception, and Spinoza's Pantheism. A great deal of comment on the Treatise can be cast away at once by remembering this fact—*e.g.*, Green's Introduction, 339, beginning "From the point that our enquiry has reached we can anticipate the line which Hume could not but take in regard to self and God." The truth is, a discussion of the theology of the Treatise would be quite conjectural and always has been such.

minimise the theoretical importance of every proposition concerning existence. When therefore the distinction is applied specially to the Being and attributes of God, it undoubtedly lessens the positive significance of the assurance so often reaffirmed in his latest work that at least there is a God. But whatever explanation Hume might have at hand to place upon these simple words, his first reason for using the form of Dialogue is amply justified within his own philosophy.

While then our author postulates in this way the validity of a belief in God's existence, he finds that questions of His attributes and His plan of providence in the world lend themselves most easily to argument and discussion. "These," he says, "have been always subjected to the disputations of men." This historical reflection forms the second reason for his composing the Dialogues. Its sting lies in the truth of it. It came in the middle of a century fruitful in "proofs" of the Divine attributes, from the pen of one who had made a careful comparison of the religious tenets of men in ancient, in classical, and in modern times. The conclusion of his 'Natural History of Religion' shows how Hume grasped the fact

of a widespread divergence of opinion, so that it is possible, by "opposing one species of superstition to another, to set them a-quarrelling: while we ourselves, during their fury and contention, happily make our escape into the calm though obscure regions of philosophy." Perhaps there is a strain of malicious mockery in these words, but they point to the possibility of such contrary views as had come under Hume's notice being set forth just as they are in the Dialogues with himself to pronounce a judicial verdict upon the merits of each.

These then are the fundamental presuppositions of the whole book: first, the certainty of God's existence; and secondly, the right of philosophy to discuss questions of His attributes.¹ The two are perfectly consistent with his attitude to both points in his other works, and at the same time they are in themselves complementary to each other. In a note added in the Appendix to the 'Treatise of Human Nature' both principles may be clearly traced, already present with the author and enabling

¹ Cf. the two presuppositions of Butler's Analogy: "Taking for proved that there is an intelligent Author of Nature and natural Governor of the world;" "My design is to apply analogy to the subject of religion both natural and revealed."—Introduction.

him, after a fashion peculiarly satisfactory to himself, to claim to be a believer even in his most agnostic attitude towards God's attributes, "The order of the universe proves an omnipotent mind. Nothing more is requisite to give a foundation to all the articles of religion, nor is it necessary we should form a distinct idea of the force and energy of the Supreme Being."¹

For the task of advancing from these presuppositions to the systematic criticism of natural theology, Hume introduces to his reader no fewer than three imaginary friends—Philo, Cleanthes, and Demea—whose conversation upon the theme of natural religion he records. Whatever classical reference there may originally have been in the names is entirely lost in the essentially modern drama in which they play their part.² In form, also, the Dia-

¹ Works, i. 456. Green and Grose.

² Thus Cleanthes has nothing in common with Zeno's pupil of that name, who presided over the Stoic School in the third century, B.C. Almost the only allusion to the nomenclature of the Dialogues occurs in a playful passage of Hamann's 'Golgotha' (1784), where he speaks of "Philo the Pharisee" having conspired with "Cleanthes the Hypocrite, to deny all possibility of understanding God's nature. They looked for a new Paraclete, the 'adventitious instructor,' to dispel their ignorance by Revelation."

logues have diverged widely from any classical model. Though an echo of Cicero's 'De Natura Deorum' is occasionally heard in Hume's language,¹ and the subjects are really akin, Hume's plan of having each of the disputants to unfold at length a tenable and complete system precludes the use of that characteristic device by which the Greek and Latin dialecticians punctuate the arguments of their leading figures with the assents and simple questions of a learner, whose experience of being led on irresistibly from point to point by the master-mind is supposed to represent the reader's own. In Hume's book Cleanthes, Philo, and Demea do not yield to one another indiscriminately on the essential points of the argument. When they agree in their views they say so, when they differ they expound their differences, but none of them succeeds altogether in convincing either of the others; and therefore at the close of the

¹ Cicero sums up thus: "Velleius held Cotta's arguments to be the truest; to me those of Balbus seemed more probable." And Hume's closing sentence is similar: "I confess that upon a serious review of the whole, I cannot but think that Philo's principles are more probable than Demea's, but that those of Cleanthes approach still nearer to the truth."

Dialogues the reader is left with an uneasy feeling that none of the great questions raised have really received an answer. When many diverse views are propounded, each so powerfully and all with so little agreement, it is difficult to say precisely which is meant to carry conviction. In consequence of this fact, many critics of the Dialogues have not hesitated to ascribe to its author only some mischievous purpose of casting all fixed religious opinions into inextricable confusion, and avoiding every expression of his own. Thus Professor Huxley, whose weakness for fathering his own agnosticism upon the great Scottish philosopher is predominant in his analysis of the Dialogues, says,¹ "One can but suspect that Hume's shadowy and inconsistent theism was the expression of his desire to rest in a state of mind which distinctly excluded negation, while it included as little as possible of affirmation respecting a problem which he felt to be hopelessly insoluble."

There can be no doubt that the Dialogues contain materials for constructing three perfectly distinct schemes of reflection on the Nature of God, each more or less exclusive of

¹ Hume, p. 157.

the others; and inasmuch as it is, humanly speaking, impossible for them all to spring from one brain without their having thoughts and ideas in common, it is easy to see that "the author had a certain amount of sympathy with all the characters, and that each of them alternately mirrored his own ever-changing mood." Parts, too, of his general doctrines are worked in at length into the utterances of all three, as was indeed unavoidable. Hume himself, however, helps the inquisitive reader somewhat farther than this. He invites him at the outset to contrast "the accurate philosophical turn of Cleanthes" with "the careless scepticism of Philo," and both of these "with the rigid inflexible orthodoxy of Demea." At the close in the passage already quoted (note, p. xxx) he puts into the mouth of Pamphilus, who reports the whole conversation, an explanatory statement that he agrees with Cleanthes rather than Philo, and with Demea least of all. Still it is only by following the argument from point to point, and noting just how much is distinctly admitted on each side, that the question of interpretation can ever be satisfactorily solved.

From the very first it has been the usual

view of critics to identify the author's theological position with Philo's scepticism, and perhaps only with the most virulently sceptical parts of it. The notice of the book in the 'Gentleman's Magazine' of October 1779, after mentioning the names of the characters, runs: "We need not say on which side this sceptical metaphysician inclines the balance, but must observe that the weapons with which Philo attacks the moral attributes of the Deity are the same with those which were employed by Lord Bolingbroke, and were most ably parried by Bishop Warburton." The polemical Priestley, in Letter IX. of his 'Letters to a Philosophical Unbeliever,' published in 1780, quotes "Philo who evidently speaks the sentiment of the writer." Kant, in his *Prolegomena* of 1784, regards Hume as speaking "in the person of Philo against Cleanthes," and holds that view throughout. And a passage¹ from a once popular book may be quoted at length to show as early as 1781 how strongly preconceived ideas of Hume's agnosticism had influenced current verdicts on the *Dialogues*. "In his dialogues concerning natural religion we have the substance of all

¹ Milner, Answer to Gibbon and Hume (1781).

his sceptical essays, and notwithstanding his declaration at the close in favour of Cleanthes, the natural religionist, it is evident from the whole tenor of the book, and still more so from the entire scepticism of his former publications, that Philo is his favourite. Sincerity constitutes no part of a philosopher's virtue." This is in that same vein of rejecting Hume's own evidence which prevails generally in criticisms of the self-revealed declarations of his position that abound in his writings and letters. Mr Balfour, in his 'Foundations of Belief,' considers him an absolute sceptic, and when confronted with utterances that point the other way, he summarises in one sentence the difficulty a whole century of philosophers have experienced in trying to believe him,—“I think too well of Hume's speculative genius and too ill of his speculative sincerity.” The meaning read into the Dialogues by an exclusive identification of Hume with Philo has maintained its place in the history of philosophy, and may safely be said to be the only one that finds acceptance to-day. Once or twice a voice has been raised to protest against it. Dugald Stewart aptly remarks that “the reasonings of Philo have often been quoted as parts of

Hume's philosophical system, although the words of Shylock or Caliban might with equal justice be quoted as speaking the real sentiments of Shakespeare." ¹ Professor Campbell Fraser also finds in the Dialogues a groping after a final theistic faith such as he himself advocates.² But these partial acknowledgments of the unfairness of prejudging the effect of Hume's latest and most mature philosophical work stand in almost complete isolation from all other references to him and his speculations: they may serve here as a preliminary warning to the reader that, along with much matter easily recognised to be a recapitulation of the author's earlier opinions, he may find in the Dialogues considerable modifications in their restatement.

The three characters introduced in the Dialogues can be easily defined and classified without identifying any of them with any particular philosophical system known in history. Demea belongs to the class of orthodox theologians who distrust or discredit all attempts to rationalise the existence of God. He praises piety and disparages phil-

¹ Dissertation note, C.C.C.

² Theism, pp. 7-10, 115 ff.

osophy. He can cite all the divines, almost, from the foundation of Christianity to support the adorably mysterious and incomprehensible nature of the Supreme Being. Human minds are finite, weak, and blind, and therefore with regard to reason he is a Sceptic holding fast always to a peculiar religious Sense which alone gives us Truth. With Malebranche he calls God a spirit, not so much in order to express positively what he is, as in order to signify that he is not Matter. Language which has a plain reference to the state and situation of man ceases to have its earthy meaning when applied to the Deity, and therefore in religion he is a Mystic. He accepts the ontological proof of an infinite Deity in the form which proceeds by analysing the idea of necessary existence, and he accepts also the cosmological proof in that attenuated form which Kant rightly reduced to the same elements as the other. In his presentation of both there is no specification of the world that actually exists: the premises of his arguments are the abstract ideas of existence in general, which lead the mind back irresistibly, in Demea's logic, to first ideas as blank and colourless as themselves. For on his view the present actual order of

things could not possibly serve as premise for any reasonable argument. It is nothing but vanity, imbecility, and misery; it exists only to be rectified under other dispensations and in some future period of existence, and so with regard to it he is a Pessimist.

This character is perhaps the most perfectly delineated of all three; nevertheless, it is not the favourite by any means with the author, and indeed it serves "mainly as a foil to the other two disputants."¹ Hume chooses to regard Demea as a type of the popular philosophiser of his own day, and the pictures drawn of him in that rôle may safely be taken to be historically accurate. With consummate literary skill Hume lays special emphasis upon point after point of his self-complacent orthodoxy, in which he is implicitly a complete agnostic.

Cleanthes is a rationalist in the sense that he has confidence in the natural operations of reason, and believes in its capacity of attaining truth, provided it confines itself to the sphere of ordinary experience and the interpretation of that experience. When he is

¹ Orr, *Hume's Influence on Theology and Philosophy*, p. 201.

confronted, as he inevitably is in Hume's plan of the drama, with the sceptical theory that all human knowledge is nescience, that "our senses are fallacious," "our understanding erroneous," "our ideas full of absurdities and contradictions," he reverts to the common-sense point of view that its refutation must be sought by an appeal to the procedure of ordinary life and practice. For such speculative reasoning undermines all positive scientific truths alike. It is sceptical of every received maxim whatever. Therefore Cleanthes brushes it aside in the present task of examining the grounds of a natural theology. For him any system is better than no system at all. At every stage of knowledge belief must be proportioned to the precise degree of evidence available, and "natural propensity" will always incline his assent towards an affirmation when there are some reasonable grounds for making it, rather than towards a suspense of judgment recommended only by an abstract and general distrust in reason. Having thus grasped the nettle firmly, he turns away from these preliminary questions with an obvious measure of confidence to consider the outside world. In its workmanship he finds evidence

of design clear and distinct, not dependent upon or needing demonstration, because it is as immediately given as the most vivid impression of the senses. He considers it proof of the existence of a designing mind, which is a sufficient object to satisfy his religious wants. He has found a Deity, and therefore he claims to be a theist.¹ His natural desire is to predicate infinite benevolence and love of his God, and to this end, when he surveys the present order of things, he would fain close his eyes and deny absolutely the misery and wickedness of man. By choice, therefore, he would, if possible, be a thorough-going optimist, but the facts are too hard for him, and in the end he modifies his conception of God's goodness in creation, and falls back upon the pious hope that in other scenes the ills of the present may be rectified, and the full fruition of human happiness and good may be attained. Throughout the book the speeches of Cleanthes are touched by a genuine emotion and enthusiasm for his cause, which apparently reflect the feelings with which Hume himself professes to regard him.

¹ Cleanthes' Theism is really a form of Deism.

For constructing the character of Philo, Hume, in the first place, has recourse to all the more sceptical elements which characterise his analysis of the human mind in his earlier works. To him the natural reason is an object of distrust: it furnishes invincible arguments against itself and all its own conclusions. It has especial difficulties in theology, because arguments there run wide of common life, get beyond the reach of our faculties, and strive after conclusions which, unlike those of political economy, ethics, and "criticism"—the topics of Hume's later life, be it noted—cannot be verified and tested by the senses and experience. A natural theology, therefore, is impossible. Moreover, it is meaningless. For it claims to make intelligible in the divine mind an ordering power which, as far ~~as~~ as our knowledge of human reason goes, is not known to be inherent in reason itself, but may be derived from external principles of orderly arrangement. Other natural powers, too, that are altogether irrational are observed daily to issue in order, so that it smacks of partiality to ascribe the origin and maintenance of the universe to any one of them rather than to

the others. To Philo it appears at times that the order in Nature is much more easily explicable by natural powers than the design in reason by rational powers, and an orderly system therefore leads us to seek its cause in itself, not in a designing mind. So far he is a "naturalist," and the question of a theology does not arise for him. Neither does that of a theodicy. For in viewing the created world he holds the balance evenly between regarding it as good or as evil. He leans to no extreme view either of itself or its causes. Morally they are indifferent, right and wrong are illusions; goodness or malice cannot be affirmed of either one or the other.

But this description of Philo's position is quite insufficient to account for the conclusions to which he eventually comes, it may be inconsistently. Throughout the last three sections of the argument, he expressly makes repeated admissions that there is evidence for a design, purpose, or intention in Nature. "It strikes everywhere the most careless, the most stupid thinker." "The suspense of judgment," which is the triumph of scepticism, "is in this case impossible." "All the sciences almost lead us insensibly to ac-

knowledge a first intelligent author, and their authority is often so much the greater as they do not directly profess that intention." "Here, then, the existence of a DEITY is plainly ascertained by reason." These and other sentences are not the strictly logical result of Philo's original position: in the Dialogues, considered as a single book, they plainly signify his partial acquiescence in the contentions of Cleanthes. They are not the results we should naturally expect to be propounded by Hume from the standpoint of the Treatise or the Inquiry; therefore, in his general philosophy, if they are to be taken as the sincere expression (and I think they must be) of his last word in developing his own doctrine, they denote in Hume a slackening of his earlier scepticism—whether through the mellowing influence of time, or natural inclination, or reasoned conviction, it is hard to say. In any case, both Cleanthes and Philo converge upon this measure of positive assertion and agreement—of course from opposite sides,—and to Philo it is the maximum he will allow in natural religion. With the popular faith of his own time Philo has no sympathy whatever, and in this re-

spect, too, he has Cleanthes with him, both again representing the life-long attitude of Hume to what he always terms "false religion."

From what has just been said, the Dialogues obviously afford a very pretty question of interpretation. The problem, however, is simplified in the end by Demea's abrupt disappearance from the stage, leaving the argument between Cleanthes and Philo. The initial alliance between Demea and Philo was one that could only endure so long as the former remained blind to the consequences which his friend would infer from their common principles. A theology which starts from a doctrine of human ignorance, adds to that the doctrine that the present order is one of unmitigated evil and illusion, and then concludes by affirming the Deity to be absolutely transcendent, is reduced at once under Hume's canons of truth to absolute scepticism. It is usually unaware of its own implications, and Hume represents it so; therefore, in any philosophical writing it would naturally be regarded as an imperfect and incomplete variation of a more reasoned theory: in dialogue it can be developed into its final form with

especial ease. This is exactly what happens in Hume's treatment of the subject: Demea is a mere puppet in the hands of the more systematic sceptic, and the issue of the whole argument may be said to lie between Philo and Cleanthes.

From this general statement there must always be excepted that section of the Dialogues which deals with the *a priori* proofs of God's Nature. Part IX. of the book is an interlude in the dramatic action, much shorter than the other parts, and quite distinct from them in every way. Its omission would not detract in the least degree from the continuity of the argument; it is complete in itself, and may properly be considered and disposed of separately. The *a priori* proofs are put into Demea's mouth, and on this one point he receives no support whatever from Philo. He is left alone to defend what is even for him an obviously ill-grounded inconsistency. And in a very few, clear, and pithy sentences Hume makes Cleanthes and Philo give the whole substance of all the criticisms that have since been directed against the use of *a priori* reasoning in speculative theology.

Of the usefulness of such reasoning could it

be validly admitted there is no real doubt, and two points with regard to it are absolutely determined in Hume's analysis. It proves the unity of God's Nature and the infinity of His attributes with a directness not to be found in any other topic. At the same time, it requires a habit of thinking so special that it neither commands general assent nor awakens strictly religious feeling. Accordingly, there are advantages and conveniences in it for theology, if the solidity of its argument be left out of question; nevertheless, even on that supposition, it is too much out of touch with ordinary life to be very convincing or to buttress up practical religion.

Hume leaves the dissection of the *a priori* arguments in the hands of Cleanthes. In the speech of Demea, setting them forth, two lines of proof are inextricably jumbled together, one from the contingency of existence which impels the mind to trace back the series of causes to a first, which is its own cause; and another, expounding the implications of the idea of a first cause, who carries the reason of His existence in Himself, whose non-existence, therefore, is expressly contradictory. This conjoining of the arguments, commonly distinguished as the

cosmological and the ontological proofs of God's existence, foreshadows the Kantian procedure, the ways of stating them being identical, and the criticisms passed upon them having considerable analogy in the two philosophers of Scotland and Germany.¹ Hume, however, so far from introducing any particular preconstituted theory of the causal nexus into his argument, as Kant does, treats the question in the Dialogues without reference to his own analysis of causes and effects, or to any other. On the path of all causal reasoning, which abstracts from the particular and seeks to predicate a cause for existence (or its equivalent the world), he establishes one grand dilemma which bars that path effectually and finally. Two metaphysical presuppositions are possible to him who would prepare premisses for the cosmological argument, and each is an abstraction from experience. Let that pass. On the first the world is conceived as an eternal succession of objects, linked together temporally by a chain of relation in which each is at once effect of a preceding cause and cause of a succeeding effect. To this

¹ *Vide* Caldecott and Mackintosh, *Theism*, pp. 193, 203. Also specially Kant's First and Fourth Antinomies.

Hume objects that it leaves no room for a prius, and therefore it seems absurd to inquire for a primum. The regular process of tracing natural causes, which in the Dialogues at least is recognised as quite legitimate, is under this presupposition taken to have universal application, while at the same time it is for theological purposes abandoned; and the maxim, every effect must have a cause, is in the end pronounced self-contradictory.

On the other presupposition, what Hume calls an arbitrary act of the mind unites all the particular parts of the temporal succession into a *whole*, which is then said to want a cause. "Did I show you," says Cleanthes, "the particular causes of each individual in a collection of twenty particles of matter, I should think it very unreasonable should you afterwards ask me what was the cause of the whole twenty. That is sufficiently explained, in explaining the cause of the parts." This impugns directly the logical possibility of conceiving the world as a unity. It is the same argument as occurs in the Treatise.¹ "Twenty men *may be considered as an unite*. The whole globe of the earth, nay, the whole universe,

¹ Works, i. 338, Part II. 2.

may be considered as an unite. That term of unity is merely a fictitious denomination." For Hume, therefore, this form of cosmological argument begins by putting forward most questionable premisses, and in addition to this objection, which is urged from his own peculiar standpoint, he proceeds to attack its method of drawing conclusions from them. The object of the argument expressly is to establish the Infinity and Unity of the Deity. But these two qualities are in the first instance surreptitiously ascribed to the created world, which, accordingly, might perfectly well be the only self-existent Being. Whatever argument for the existence of God adopts as its method the ordinary category of cause, is bound to assume for the world the very qualities it wishes to prove for the Deity; and to Hume, in his most agnostic mood, all such arguments appear reducible to pure naturalism or materialism.

In the Dialogues, therefore, the cosmological argument which, as Kant says, professes "to begin with experience and is not completely *a priori*," is shown to derive all its nerve and force not from its supposed solid basis in a reference to the real world, but from meta-

physical presuppositions which have transformed that reference into abstractions that seem to Hume altogether apart from experience and imaginary. He is not content, however, with merely detecting this sophistical illusion in the argument, but proceeds to give it a turn that is distinctly antitheistical. In endeavouring to link God and the world together as cause and effect, the mind wavers between two views of that relationship as it is evidenced in creation. Either the present order is equated mechanically to its cause, in which case, being the better known, it merits the more adoration in itself, and can be so regarded as to exclude any inference to God, or else it is arbitrarily taken to be contingent and insufficient in its existence to be real; and then Hume holds that this arbitrary judgment may as easily be passed upon God's Being as upon that of the world. In both respects Hume's trenchant criticism is most effective, and while it will still be possible to inquire whether the more refined analysis of the concept of cause in modern times has enabled theology to rehabilitate such argument, it is necessary here once more to emphasise the fact that Hume's treatment of it is in no

way dependent upon the limitations, either of his own outlook or of that of his time.

The remaining parts of Demea's argument make no pretence of appealing to our experience, and are purely *a priori*. In very few words his reasoning runs: "We must have recourse to a necessarily existent Being, who carries the REASON of His existence in Himself, and who cannot be supposed not to exist without an express contradiction. There is consequently such a Being—that is, there is a Deity." This process of speculation is dealt with in the most summary fashion by Cleanthes whose words so obviously express all that Hume has to say on the matter, that they may be quoted in full: "Nothing is demonstrable unless the contrary implies a contradiction. Nothing that is distinctly conceivable implies a contradiction. Whatever we conceive as existent we can also conceive as non-existent. There is no being, therefore, whose non-existence implies a contradiction. Consequently there is no being whose existence is demonstrable. I propose this argument as entirely decisive, and am willing to rest the whole controversy upon it."

The method, therefore, of such argument is

rejected by Hume, almost contemptuously: he is altogether out of sympathy with the very possibility of it. But he also brings his own theory of "necessity" to bear upon the idea of necessary existence as it is predicated of the Deity, his purpose being to prove how naturally it affords an inference directly opposite to the religious hypothesis. Mathematical necessity depends upon ideal relations, and for Hume is more easily ascribed to the propositions of algebra (and arithmetic), where the mind deals with its own abstractions, than to those of geometry, for which Hume could account only with great difficulty.¹ And "necessity" in mathematics is so obviously independent of the question of the existence of objects, that the theological use of that idea to illustrate some occult quality in God involves an application of the term that is altogether new. Both Cleanthes and Philo take their stand upon the nature of mathematical necessity, which Kant in a parallel passage calls "this logical necessity, the source of the greatest delusions." Cleanthes is content to point out that "necessity" is a term valid only in defining the relations of ideas: "We lie

¹ Treatise, Part iii. sect. 1.

under a necessity of always conceiving twice two to be four." Existence is a term used only in dealing with "matters of fact." The words, therefore, *necessary existence*, have no meaning, or, which is the same thing, none that is "consistent." Philo goes on to point out the danger of introducing the idea of necessity at all into our cosmology, where it may lead as easily to a naturalism of necessary laws as to a theism. In mathematics every theorem that is proved states a necessary property of the objects to which it applies, and therefore, however much regularity and order and beauty there may be in any of its problems, it is always possible to demonstrate that every appearance of design is in reality the work of blind necessity. It might easily be the case that just as the most complex arithmetical series to a skilled calculator is an immediate deduction from the simple uninspiring rule that one and one make two, so the whole economy of the universe, if we are to ask why it must be as it is and not otherwise, can be referred back to previous states which for natural science render it absolutely impossible that any other disposition than the present should ever have come to pass.

And because science has a perfect right to subject all its objects without exception to the power of thus deducing their necessity, it may, with some appearance of justice, convert this principle of its own method into a universally valid postulate. A mathematician who observes that the diagonal of a square or the circumference of a circle bear a fixed relation to the magnitude of the circle or the diameter respectively, and are at the same time incommensurable with these latter, considers himself justified in taking this relation to be a necessary one, and sets about proving it without any further preliminaries. If, as in the *a priori* argument, this same idea of a necessary existence be introduced in a scientific view of the created world, Hume points out that no room whatever is left for a hypothesis of design. This hypothesis being all-important for an empirical or natural theology, Hume rejects the ontological argument on every point: his explanation of its common acceptance simply is that "a habit of thinking," appropriate in mathematics, has been "transferred to subjects where it ought not to have place."

Such is Hume's criticism of the cosmological

and ontological arguments as he conceived either them or the principles on which they rest. The subsequent history of philosophy may be searched in vain for any attempt to meet it fairly and squarely. It is the final and irrevocable judgment of empiricism upon *a priori* arguments in theology, and even when his general principles, or even when other of his conclusions, have failed to commend themselves to a later age, it at least has never been formally appealed against. "Theism," says Professor Flint, "is not vitally interested in the fate of the so-called *a priori* or ontological arguments,"¹ and this remark well describes the resignation with which modern thought has viewed their disappearance.

Since Hume wrote his Dialogues, argument of an ontological type has been concerned with a question at once more comprehensive in its bearings and more definite in its formulation—namely, the investigation of the fundamental relations of all thought and all existence. The primary and necessary principles of knowledge have to be reconciled at every point with the self-existence of reality, if knowledge is to be accepted as true and not illusory. This ques-

¹ Theism, p. 267.

tion includes the older inquiry as to the existence of a Deity corresponding to the ideals of reason, and like it demands an answer from the analysis of the implications of thought itself, not from anything that is given in sense or comprehended by understanding. It is more concerned, however, to spiritualise the universe as an object of knowledge than to cognise an individual or personal spirit in it. Hume's difficulties for theistic speculation are circumvented, therefore, by stating them on the grand scale as objections to the apprehension of the most simple matters of fact. When this is done a dilemma is established between our believing the mind to have a natural credibility in virtue of its own essence, and our affirming it dogmatically to be without relation to any real Being whatever. And so all the points touched upon by Hume receive one by one a solution in which his distinctions between "ideas" and "facts," between "principles of union among ideas" and "natural relations" disappear. Thus for Herbart causal connection reduces to a purely logical form; for Lotze it is the evidence directly given of a "supernatural sustaining power, immanent in all existence and operative in all change," in

the revealing activity of one person to another : and so for these and all similar systems the whole of the theory of knowledge depends upon ontological argument. The idea of God, like other ultimate truths, is intuitive ; it is the work of "objective reason" ; it is a pre-supposition of thought ; or it is the unity of thought and being on which all individual thought and existence rest. There are many possible alternatives for such speculation when it takes upon itself to become theological, but all are linked together through their common starting-point in the endeavour to prove consciousness and its real content to be a harmonious and indivisible whole. Suppose now that this basis be granted, and that it be found sufficiently trustworthy, then the argument to the existence of God does proceed upon the familiar lines of the old cosmological and ontological proofs, and resembles them closely enough to pass for a serious attempt at reconstruction. It proves God's existence by invoking the necessities of human reason ; it deduces His Personality from the needed completion of all our conceptions ; and it ascribes attributes to Him which are not by any means to be verified in our passive experience of any known

objects (the created world), but are implied in our outgoing self-realising activity. And once this stream of *a priori* reasoning is in full flood, it were, in Hume's own vivid phrase, "to stop the ocean with a bulrush" to urge the considerations which had sufficed in the Dialogues for diverting its first course. Nevertheless, whenever any serious attempt is made to expound or illustrate or defend the unity and harmony of the ideal with the real, the argument cannot but take upon itself a teleological form. It can easily be classified under this heading, and probably such reasoning is invested with its peculiar charm for speculative thought solely through the considerations of design in mind and external reality which it undoubtedly contains.

In the Dialogues,¹ with the exception of the few sentences of Part IX., which deals expressly with the *a priori* arguments, the treatment of Hume's subject is concerned entirely with an analysis of the teleological argument. The *a priori* proofs being ruled out, the whole book is dominated by Cleanthes' steady insistence upon this one foundation for his theism.

¹ From this point references to the Dialogues will be given to the paging in the present edition.

“By this argument *a posteriori*, and by this argument alone, do we prove at once the existence of a Deity, and His similarity to human mind and intelligence,” (p. 31); accordingly the sole question is as to the possibility and accuracy of this proof. If, however, Cleanthes admits only one form of argument, he represents it to be so wide as to be all-inclusive. In different passages he appeals to “the whole world and every part of it”—“the image of mind reflected on us from innumerable objects,” “our immeasurable desires of good,” “the operations of reason,” and in fact to all actual phenomena of experience, external and internal alike, as affording material for his hypothesis of design. To begin with, therefore, the scope of his proposed theme knows no limits.

Again, an obvious consequence of the book falling into the literary form of dialogue is, that the argument for a natural religion in it undergoes a process of gradual development and refinement in the course of the conversation. Simple and ill-defined conceptions are succeeded by others more complex and more accurate as the conversation proceeds, each of the speakers contributing something to the

final result. On Cleanthes alone lies the burden of maintaining the positive conclusion. The other two are on the negative side. If there is any continuity in the book, an impartial analysis ought not to be adversely affected by the progressive restatement which naturally ensues of the position of each. Cleanthes, for example, gives up a notable part of his original scheme when he abandons the possibility of tracing design in the moral world. Philo in turn, by reason of the admission he makes to him at the close of the argument, cannot be supposed to retain his scepticism unbroken. Each of the two is in many different points corrected by the other.

The drama opens with a very complete ^x statement of the purely sceptical theory of human knowledge from Philo and Demea. Our natural reason is subject to "uncertainty and endless contrarieties," not only in science but "even in subjects of common life and practice" (p. 9). The science of quantity alone has any pretence of certainty, and even in it error and contradictions are more abundant than truth. These are the old commonplaces of Hume in the Treatise when he takes that *intense* view of reason to which he is impelled

as a philosopher, and in opposition to it Cleanthes reminds him of the sentiments of his spleen and indolence which he had there confessed to govern his life as a man; how "it is impossible for him to persevere in this total scepticism or make it appear in his conduct for a few hours." The bent of his mind relaxes, and his conduct is so obviously subject to a necessity to believe, that his scepticism appears to others pretended and insincere.

Here, then, in the Dialogues the two opposing elements in which Hume's theory of knowledge had ended, the enthusiasm of abstract speculative negation and the instinctive determination to live and act by ordinary maxims, are restated exactly—almost in the same language—as in the last section of the *Treatise on the Understanding*. There Hume in his single person makes no choice, and indeed prides himself upon the fact that because it is a choice "betwixt a false reason and none at all," he can regard it with indifference. But here and now the choice is made definitely by Philo the sceptic himself, and the balance on which judgment formerly was suspended inclines ever so little to the side of belief "in common life." It is necessary to note

exactly how much he will admit, because it is through the very first chink in the sceptical armour, so perfect before, that Cleanthes pushes home his thrusts. The words of Philo's present confession are: "To whatever length any one may push his speculative principles of scepticism, he must act, I own, and live, and converse; and for this conduct he is not obliged to give any other reason than the absolute necessity he lies under of so doing" (p. 14). "The sceptical reasonings" are "so refined and subtile that they are not able to counterpoise the more solid and more natural arguments derived from the senses and experience." Philo therefore lays aside the pretence of absolute scepticism for practical life and conduct, and also, what is more important, for his consideration of the sciences commonly called "natural." "So long as we confine our speculations to trade, or morals, or politics, or criticism, we make appeals every moment to common-sense and experience which strengthen our philosophical conclusions and remove (at least in part) the suspicion which we so justly entertain with regard to every reasoning that is very subtile and refined." And a few pages later, after Cleanthes had

clinched this concession, he refers more boldly still to "those suggestions of the senses and common understanding by which the most determined sceptic must allow himself to be governed" (p. 24). One cannot help feeling that Hume is here allowing that very ground for an answer to himself which was almost simultaneously being occupied by Reid for his *Philosophy of Common-Sense*.

It is, however, unnecessary to ask how far this position differs from the doctrine of the *Treatise*, because it appears that Philo, having admitted this much positively in the *Dialogues*, is immediately carried one step farther. For a single moment he excludes theology from the favour yielded to other sciences. In theological reasonings we have not the advantage of an appeal to sense and experience. "We know not how far we ought to trust our vulgar methods of reasoning in such a subject, since even in common life and in that province which is peculiarly appropriated to them, we cannot account for them, and are entirely guided by a kind of instinct or necessity in employing them."

Cleanthes at once questions the validity of this distinction. For him a "natural religion"

is bound to put itself strictly into line with all natural sciences whatever. "In vain would the sceptic make a distinction between science and common life, or between one science and another. The arguments employed in all, if just, are of a similar nature, and contain the same force and evidence. Or if there be any difference among them, the advantage lies entirely on the side of theology and natural religion."

He divides the various systems of scepticism that seem possible to him into three classes. One is fatal to "all knowledge," and not to religion specially. It is absolute agnosticism which discusses no evidence in any particular case, but dismisses everything as uncertain or insoluble. Without any breach of courtesy to his companions he can liken this way of thinking to the brutal and ignorant prejudice which the vulgar entertain to everything they do not easily understand. The most generally accepted results in science depend upon elaborate trains of minute reasoning, and yet because they are so abstruse, they are not one whit less securely established than the plainest experimental deduction. And for his own argument he promises by anticipation that

it will be of the simplest and most obvious kind. If "the general presumption against human reason" be made a plea against natural religion, there is neither need nor opportunity to proceed further; but this is the very presumption which Philo has put away from himself, and therefore the only possible method for "the most refined and philosophical sceptics" is to consider each particular evidence "apart, and proportion their assent to the particular degree of evidence which occurs." To the general question of the bare credibility of our knowing faculties, Cleanthes has his own answer. If that be allowed to arise, a problem is set of which he says, "I have not capacity for so great an undertaking: I have not leisure for it: I perceive it to be superfluous." Superfluous it certainly was in the discussion between himself and Philo, if the latter was willing to abide by the statements he had already made.

Besides this form of total unbelief, Cleanthes, in considering the possibilities of scepticism, makes a distinction between two other forms of it, very aptly described by Philo as "religious" and "irreligious," or, as the modern phrase is, "anti-religious" scepticism. The first, which exalts the certainty of theology, and

distrusts the common sciences, is the most objectionable to Hume. It lends itself easily to priestcraft, which he held in steady abhorrence, and so far as it is the motive of Demea's contentions in the Dialogues, it issues in irrational obscurantism and receives the full force of Hume's satire. Philo sums up the verdict for Cleanthes in one sentence, "If we distrust human reason, we have now no other principle to lead us into religion."

There now remains the third form, namely, that of "irreligious" scepticism, which may depend upon the most varied grounds, but must at least give its reasons when called for. To it Philo declares himself to adhere, and he states the considerations which determine him to it as plainly as possible. "In reality, Cleanthes, there is no need to have recourse to that affected scepticism, so displeasing to you, in order to come at this determination. Our ideas reach no farther than our experience. We have no experience of divine attributes and operations. I need not conclude my syllogism. You can draw the inference yourself" (p. 30). With this acknowledgment the preliminaries may be considered settled by mutual consent, and the

ground is cleared between the two principal disputants. The question of the natural fallibility of human reason is waived and remains so, even when at various points later Philo indicates implicitly the possibility of reviving it. What remains to be argued is whether experience, the sole fountain of truth, yields any evidence whatever apposite to the theological inference, and the question if such evidence can be legitimately converted into proof.

For a starting-point in his construction of a teleological view of the world, Cleanthes adopts one of the popular deistical conceptions of the eighteenth century. The universe is "nothing but one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines, which again admit of subdivisions," apparently to an unlimited degree. This familiar figure of speech is not intended to express more than the fact of ubiquitous order, and because of its common use in contemporary theological essays, both Cleanthes and Philo set themselves to the task of stating the argument depending upon it before the discussion begins. Each gives a short summary, and each agrees that the other has not done injustice to its ordinary

statement, Philo saying (p. 35), "I must allow that he [Cleanthes] has fairly represented that argument," while Cleanthes assents (p. 38) that Philo "has made a fair representation of it." We can therefore draw upon the speeches of both for a formal analysis of its successive steps. The fact of order in the world is admitted; but this is "not of itself any proof of design." We can only say that as it occurs throughout all nature, order or adaptation or adjustment resembles the productions of human contrivance. Only experience can inform us at all of the causes of such order; and as we find by experience that the plan of any work of human art—a watch, a ship, a house—is first formed in the mind, so we conclude that without this preparation such things would for ever remain uncreated and unknown. Therefore by *analogy* we conclude that the original principle of the universe lies in a designing mind. The causes in each case must be of the same kind, only proportioned each to its several effect.¹ The whole argument

¹ This representation of analogy as involving "a proportion" is borrowed from Butler. Kant also, speaking of the physico-theological argument in the Critique, says, "We infer from the order and design visible in the universe as a disposition of a thoroughly contingent character the

undergoes considerable development in Hume's hands, and obviously it is stated only as a convenient and easily recognised scheme upon which he can graft his own criticisms. In particular, the questions of the nature of "analogy" and of the "proportion" it involves are left open, and admit discussion at once.

The unavoidable uncertainty of analogy in every science is an immediate objection to its use. No stronger evidence than perfect similarity in two cases of the same nature is "ever desired or sought after," but wherever there is difference and alteration analogy is weakened, and its conclusions do not command confidence in the same degree. It demonstrates only probabilities, and therefore it is essentially a method of deduction to be entered upon with the slow and deliberate step of philosophy, and not in uncritical haste. Philo questions its validity in the present case for three distinct reasons, stated briefly in Part II. of the Dialogues. In the first place, existence of a cause proportioned thereto." In a note to the prolegomena (§ 58 dealing directly with the Dialogues), analogy is treated in a formal illustration, "As the welfare of children ($=a$) is to the love of parents ($=b$), so is the welfare of men ($=c$) to the unknown in God ($=x$) which we call love.

there is no proof offered of the similarity between the universe and the productions of human contrivance, as there ought to be in face of apparent dissimilitude. In the second place, other natural powers than reason are observed at work in the mechanism of the universe, and therefore, unless something determines us in favour of one particular principle, we could not pretend to draw an analogy from the operations of any natural power in its own peculiar sphere, or infer it to be the first cause of all. And lastly, our experience extends only to a small part of the universe, and to a very short period of its existence: the inference sought to be drawn in theology is one as to the cause of the whole from the beginning of all time.

The second objection, very briefly stated here, contains the nerve of all Philo's argument in Parts IV.-VIII., and if its consideration be deferred until we treat of them, we only follow Hume's own plan. The last objection receives its answer at once; for, as it is worded in the Dialogues, Hume describes it, quite justly, to be brought forward "somewhat between jest and earnest."

Philo has reached the point of saying that

for his opponent "it were requisite that we had experience of the origin of worlds; it is not sufficient, surely, that we have seen ships and cities arise from human contrivance," and demanding how the theistic inference can be confirmed by repetition of instances and experiment. But the conditions imposed by this demand are obviously incapable of fulfilment: they put an impossible meaning upon the word experience, and Cleanthes points this out perfectly clearly in reply, "To prove by experience the origin of the world, is not more contrary to common speech than to prove the motion of the earth from the same principle." Our experience is limited in space and in time and in extent,—we cannot better it; but this fact alone cannot invalidate our right to infer a meaning in what we do know.

Philo, like Hume's imaginary opponent in the *Essay on Providence and a Future State*, has insisted that the singular and unparalleled nature of the act of creation bars all possibility of drawing any analogy between it and other events; and Hume, in the first person, had already met the difficulty by a direct negative. "In a word, I much doubt whether it is possible for a cause to be known

only by its effect, or to be of so singular and particular a nature as to have no parallel and no similarity with any other cause or object that has ever fallen under our observation." And accordingly, when stripped of the impossible demand for infinite experience, the third objection of Philo to the analogical argument returns upon the first, and becomes a call for further explanation of the alleged similarity between human productive activity, as we observe it, and the generation of an orderly universe. The "reasonings of too nice and delicate a nature," upon which Hume had declined to enter in the Inquiry, are forced upon him now, when the whole question is being treated expressly.

The method which Cleanthes adopts for overcoming his opponent's first objection is to minimise it. "It is by no means necessary that theists should prove the similarity of the works of Nature to those of art, because this similarity is self-evident and undeniable." The proof which Philo asks for is not one that can be reduced to the forms of logic: the first step towards the inference of design must be intuitive. The possibility of arguments of this logically irregular nature

is proved, says Cleanthes, by their universal and irresistible influence. If, in the simplest inference from perception,—for example, if, when we infer from hearing a speech the fact that there was a speaker expressing his meaning in what we hear,—it then be objected that our inference cannot be expressed in accordance with the principles of logic, and must therefore be rejected, nothing remains but that form of absolute scepticism which both have already agreed to abjure. All conclusions concerning fact are founded upon experience, and accordingly the possible validity of intuitive deductions from it, such as are every day drawn in common life, must be admitted by all who take up the positions held by the two leaders in the Dialogues. Self-evident intuition always accompanies experience, and Cleanthes holds that his opponent's demand for proof of the similarity between creation and a work of human art implies a misapprehension of the essential nature of the only possible assurance on that point.

He gives two examples of immediate deductions which resemble the theistic inference. A voice being heard which is not mere sound,

but is articulate with meaning and instruction, and rational, wise, coherent; we at once conclude that it proceeds from reason and intelligence, and in our conclusion it is a matter of indifference whether the sound be extraordinarily loud and widespread, or whether it be of the commonest kind. Again, we read a book, and find it conveys a meaning and intention; we conclude that it sprang from design. Let it be supposed that books could be propagated by natural generation and descent, as plants and animals are; even then our reading still justifies our conclusion. Nature is like a library of books addressed to our minds in a universal language. "When it reasons and discourses; when it expostulates, argues, and enforces its views and topics; when it applies sometimes to the pure intellect, sometimes to the affections; when it collects, disposes, and adorns every consideration suited to the subject: could you persist in asserting that all this at the bottom had really no meaning, and that the first formation of this volume in the loins of its original parent proceeded not from thought and design?" (p. 52). To demand "proof" of the similarity of the meaning of Nature to the

meaning of language is to demand the impossible. The self-evident is indemonstrable. "Consider, anatomise the eye," says Cleanthes, "survey its structure and contrivance, and tell me, from your own feeling, if the idea of a contriver does not immediately flow in upon you with a force like that of sensation." And whatever object we set before ourselves teleologically, it is the same idea with the same force that it suggests. The crucial difficulty for Cleanthes is just the one to which this ultimate position is a complete answer in the Dialogues. So far, the general current of the conversation, as the present writer conceives it, has been concerned with the important question of the correct method in teleological argument. And Hume, in his treatment of the old well-worn demonstration of God's existence from the mechanism of the universe, represents one at least of the three disputants to have penetrated to the fundamental point on which it all depends. An immediate self-evident intuition with the same force as sensation cannot be demonstrated by the principles of logic, and Cleanthes seems to have grasped to the full all the bearings of his position, just as they were

afterwards grasped, in treating of the theory of knowledge generally by those who replied to Hume. The power of conviction, where evidence of this kind is adduced, is so great that logic is required not to dispute it but to account for it, or admit it as best logic can. The only question applicable to such evidence as Cleanthes pins his faith to is that of its occurrence or non-occurrence in consciousness, and if we carry our survey of the development of the argument to the close of the whole book, we shall find that this particular question is always answered in an affirmative way. Cleanthes points out repeatedly that the hypothesis of design cannot be got rid of at any turn, and in the end Philo adopts it himself for his own conclusions. The conclusion to design is exceedingly plain and simple according to Cleanthes; it may only give foundation for a very slight fabric of superadded truth: but again, even on that supposition, both disputants declare themselves satisfied of its sufficiency.

At the point in the Dialogues where this position is reached (in the end of Part III.) Philo is represented "as a little embarrassed and confounded," and makes no reply to

Cleanthes' final statement of his meaning: the questions which intervene between it and the resumption in the concluding part of the thread of argument here dropped deal with other issues. In the letter to Sir Gilbert Elliott already quoted, Hume himself divides the Dialogues at this point, and advises his friend that he need go no farther in order to apprehend his true meaning.

We have already seen that it is Demea who diverts the continuity of the argument at another point, by introducing as a side issue the discussion on the *a priori* proofs of God's Being; so, also, it is he who gives the opening later on to the consideration of the moral argument. And at the present juncture it was Demea again who "broke in upon the discourse" and saved Philo's countenance. The interruption which is put into his mouth revives Philo's second objection to the design argument, exactly as it had already been expressed by him, and to the exposition of it the sceptic naturally turns the whole course of the debate; but with Demea's disappearance at the close of Part XI. he joins hands again with Cleanthes upon the conclusions reached thus early in the book. If, then,

we are to interpret the Dialogues as expressing any settled opinions at all of the author, we must infer that he considered the existence of design in Nature to be established either certainly, or at least sufficiently, by the appeal to what is self-evident.

So far, then, the author's procedure has been directed simply to prove that design is traced in Nature by one of the simplest and most direct inferences of which the human mind is capable. However, no sooner has Cleanthes gained this first and most essential point than the difficulties which follow it are brought up with all the force of the author's best style. They are many and very diverse, and some of them are so evidently true to Hume's general attitude on common subjects, they are treated at such length and with so much dialectical skill, that they do undoubtedly constitute a formidable attack from him upon the whole design argument, and thus far justify the view ordinarily taken that the Dialogues are directly antitheistical in their tendency. Still, it is only by selecting the finest and most subtle doubts which the hypothesis of design suggests to Philo, by ignoring any positive truths that both he and Cleanthes profess to accept about

creating intelligence, and by overlooking altogether the argument which leads up to them, that most of the references to the book in the history of philosophy interpret it in the purely sceptical sense. An impartial verdict ought to hold both the positive affirmations, at least so far as they seem agreed upon, and the negative criticisms together for a proper estimate of this contribution of Hume to the philosophy of theology.

For the teleological argument, as Hume conceived it, really involves two distinct movements of thought. The first is the argument to, or towards, design; which is meant to prove no more than that design, and a designing intelligence of some sort, must exist in the universe. The second is the argument from design; which follows the first and depends upon it, which seeks to define further the conception of designing intelligence by help of its works, and in particular proceeds to inquire whether or not such intelligence can legitimately have predicated of it such attributes as personality and unity, perfection and infinity, or self-existence and omnipotence. The first movement may be exceedingly simple, the second always is exceedingly involved. That

Hume should have distinguished the two, and approved of the first while treating the second in a thoroughly sceptical manner, does not seem to have occurred even as a possibility either to friendly or unfriendly critics.

Accordingly, no sooner has Cleanthes expounded what he calls his "hypothesis of design" than Demea inquires whether it may not "render us presumptuous by making us imagine we comprehend the Deity, and have some adequate idea of His nature and attributes?" He restates Hume's own doctrine of the human mind just as Philo had done in the as yet undiscussed objection to the design argument which we have already noticed. The human mind is nothing more than a succession of ideas united in one subject yet distinct, arranged for one moment yet constantly fleeting away: if Hume can explain it at all, it is the product of natural forces. In its beginning it is observed daily to originate in generation and birth, in its course the machinery of thought is altered and even controlled by external causes and accidental impression; all that we know of its essence is that it seems dependent, and not original or self-supporting. If, then, Cleanthes maintains that there is

evidence of the existence of a designing intelligence, both Demea and Philo are quite entitled, on Hume's principles, to ask how we can possibly suppose this divine mind of his to be "the model of the universe" (pp. 40 and 57). Cleanthes is quite willing to be tied down to affirming the similarity between the divine mind and the human, and says so with no uncertain voice. The creating intelligence is "like the human," and "the liker the better"; twice he declares "I know no other" (p. 74), and courageously taking up this position with all the difficulties attaching to it, he allows the epithet of anthropomorphism to be applied to his doctrine with indifference or even with his express approval. He holds fast to his "first inferences," as Philo terms them later (p. 92), and without reservation declares always for the positive consequences of the resemblance of the divine to the human, even to the length of affirming of God weaknesses and imperfections, and limitations by necessity, such as constantly are experienced in man.

Philo, on the other hand, has no difficult task on the negative side in showing "the inconveniences of that anthropomorphism" which his opponent has embraced. It is here that

the destructive criticism of the Dialogues is really to be found, and here that it is based upon Hume's own settled opinions. It was Kant's accurate and most just verdict upon the book¹ that "all the arguments in it dangerous to theism centre round this one point of anthropomorphism," and yet the danger from Philo is not so much to Cleanthes' method of proof as to the meaning to be read into the conclusion. In the winding up of the argument, where Philo acknowledges that the "existence of a Deity is plainly ascertained by reason," he states quite clearly how much scope he will finally allow to the argument from design. "If we are not contented with calling the first and supreme cause a GOD or DEITY, but desire to vary the expression, what can we call Him but MIND or THOUGHT, to which He is justly supposed to bear a considerable resemblance?" (p. 170). This clearly is to admit the bare elements of his opponent's second contention that the designing intelligence is like in kind to the human mind, and Philo goes on to define the question between them as one of the degree of resemblance. This presents itself to him conveniently as a

¹ Prolegomena, § 57.

species of verbal controversy "which, from the very nature of language and of human ideas, is involved in perpetual ambiguity, and can never, by any precaution or any definitions, be able to reach a reasonable certainty or precision."¹ It is generally admitted that in the history of the teleological argument, the greatest error of its exponents has been their uncritical tendency to press the anthropomorphic analogy to unreasonable lengths, and in this respect their licence requires always to be curtailed. When Philo in the *Dialogues* undertakes this task, it is done thoroughly enough, the argument is confined within limits narrower than those it commonly is inflated to fill; but that process of compression is by no means one of annihilation, although by entering upon a question of degree as "incurably ambiguous" as those referred to by Hume, any one may easily persuade himself of the contrary. It is just in conceiving the Deity after the likeness of man that the strength of the teleological argument lies, and

¹ For this doctrine in a modern form, cf. Bradley, 'Appearance and Reality,' p. 533. "It is better to affirm personality than to call the Absolute impersonal. But neither mistake should be necessary."

its weakness. For its proper treatment it is essential that both sides should be accurately displayed, and in this respect the Dialogues seem to afford an excellent example of systematic analysis.

The first inconvenience of the anthropomorphic explanation of order in the universe is that it need not be taken to be final or complete. Human reason itself is held by Philo not to be self-dependent. We may not know or be able to explain the causes why its ideas arrange themselves in order to form plans towards its ends, but we have no more right to attribute that power of arranging to a rational faculty inherent in mind than we have to attribute order to an orderly faculty in other natural powers. Philo, therefore, having no theory of reason as a real entity, independent of the ideas, passions, and sensations which "succeed each other" in it, has no theory to account for the falling into order of "the different ideas which compose the reason of the Supreme Being" (p. 67). Their order or arrangement require and demand an explanation just as much as the order in the visible world. "The first step we take leads us on for ever. When you go

one step beyond the mundane system, you only excite an inquisitive humour which it is impossible ever to satisfy." To him Cleanthes' explanation of the form of the world by a divine intelligence appears only "to shove off the difficulty" for a moment, and to account for what we observe by means of a cause itself unaccountable. It sets up an infinite series of deductions in which the same thing always remains unexplained. "If the material world rests upon a similar ideal world, this ideal world must rest upon some other, and so on without end."

Cleanthes, however, refuses to be drawn into this discussion of the possibility of an infinite tracing out of the causes of design. "Even in common life, if I assign a cause for any event, is it any objection that I cannot assign the cause of that cause, and answer every new question which may incessantly be started?" (p. 69). His first step is not the beginning of an endless journey from hypothesis to hypothesis "entirely in the air," as he terms such procedure in another connection (p. 137),—it is an immediate inference to design and a designing mind; and with an obvious hit at his opponent, he asks what philosophers could

possibly insist upon demanding the cause of every cause, "philosophers who confess ultimate causes to be totally unknown." Cleanthes does not attempt to give a theory of reason in opposition to Philo's,—no doubt the author felt the impossibility of representing him in that rôle,—he only denies that there is any need for him to do so. "You ask me the cause of my intelligent cause." "I know not; I care not; that concerns not me. I have found a Deity, and here I stop my inquiry. Let those go farther who are wiser or more enterprising."

Philo therefore quits this ground of objection in the Dialogues, and a little later, in the course of his own attempt to give a naturalistic theory of order, when he is asked by Demea to offer some ultimate explanation of the vegetative principle which he prefers to the intelligent cause of all (p. 98), he explicitly refers to the nature of the agreement reached by Cleanthes and himself. For Cleanthes it was considered sufficient if the first step is supported by experience. He himself takes the same ground, and maintains that it is undeniable that vegetation and generation as well as reason are experienced to be principles of order in nature. "If I rest my system

of cosmogony on the former preferably to the latter, 'tis at my choice. The matter seems entirely arbitrary. And when Cleanthes asks me (which of course he has not done) the cause of my great vegetative or generative faculty, I am equally entitled to ask him the cause of his great reasoning principle. These questions we have agreed to forbear on both sides, and it is chiefly his interest on the present occasion to stick to this agreement." The dispute between pure naturalism and theism is not to be decided against, either by the respective difficulties of explaining the essential operations and internal structure of natural forces on the one hand, or of reason on the other. In both cases there is the same inconvenience; and while Philo is left to say that "an ideal system arranged of itself without a precedent design is not a whit more explicable than a material one," the dispute is not made one whit clearer by this particular method of comparing their merits.

The battle on this point, then, is left drawn, and a lasting truce called by mutual consent. But with the suggestion of the possibility of a naturalistic derivation of reason, the way is open for a pure naturalism to claim an equal

right with the most refined spiritual interpretation of the world, and the discussion in the Dialogues gradually veers round to a balancing of these two alternatives.

The argument from design is, first of all, considerably reduced in its weight by the losses which its conception of the Deity undergoes in direct consequence of its anthropomorphic method of conceiving Him. Infinity, perfection, unity, and omnipotence,—in fact, all the transcendent attributes usually connected with the idea of God,—are implicitly denied in affirming His likeness to man; and in fact no part of the design argument is directed to prove them. It proceeds upon the strictly empirical method, and therefore is doomed from the first to fall short of attributes which apply to nothing we experience in observing real things. No combination of the evidences of design can ever prove the “unity” of the designer, that very term “unity” being a “fictitious denomination,” and no addition of them can reach to His infinity. To all Philo’s suppositions of possible ways of conceiving the Deity, or deities, without these attributes, Cleanthes accordingly has no answer, save to point out that none of them “get rid of the

hypothesis of design." He never abuses his argument by pretending that it proves more than it can reach; indeed he has his own objections to using the word *infinite*, which savours more of panegyric than of philosophy, and should be replaced by more accurate and more moderate expressions (p. 142), in which our knowledge of God approximates to the comprehension of His perfection, representing His wisdom and power as greater than any other that we know, without proceeding to define them as infinitely great.¹ The argument from design reaches a conception of God that may be lofty, yet it can never attain to the conception of an Infinite. It defines His qualities by similarity with finite things, and that being its professed aim it accepts cheerfully those inconveniences which arise from its not attaining a fuller result than it actually seeks after. At this stage of the argument² Philo touches upon the alternative of having recourse to a pantheism, not so much as a possibility

¹ An empirical philosophy must always take the idea of infinity to be reached by way of approximation,—a method which derives confirmation from its use in Euclidean geometry.

² Part VI.

for himself as for his opponent. He expresses himself unwilling to defend any particular system of this nature, yet because it is "at least a theory that we must, sooner or later, have recourse to whatever system we embrace," it cannot be overlooked. The classical notion of the soul of the world is introduced because it has the apparent advantage of representing the form and order of the universe to be coeval and conterminous with the matter. It has, therefore, many points of kinship with Cleanthes' teleological theism, and is, indeed, as Philo remarks, "a new species of anthropomorphism." It excels just in emphasising the inherent nature of the eternal principles of order in the world, and in treating their connection with it organically rather than mechanically.

But Hume does not discuss the possibilities of a spiritual pantheism at any length ; he makes Philo accept the suggestion of Cleanthes, that "the world seems to bear a stronger resemblance to a vegetable than to an animal"; and because it is to the former a matter of indifference whether we hold the original inherent principle of order to be in thought or in matter, he abandons at once the only part

which, in the doctrine of a world-soul, attributes reason to it. A spiritual pantheism always suggests itself as an easy variation upon theism, and we may shrewdly suspect it was introduced in the Dialogues only as a temporary suggestion in order to lead up to pan-materialism.

Hitherto Philo has confined himself to pointing out "the inconveniences"¹ of his friend's anthropomorphism, but now, in expounding a purely naturalistic or materialistic hypothesis of order, he recognises that his attack is no longer upon "the consequences" of the design argument, but upon "the first inferences," from which it all depends. The real enemy of theism is naturalism. Both start from the same base in the observed fact of the presence of *order* in the world, but from this common point of agreement they derive principles that are altogether irreconcilable. For one party, the first step is to prove that order implies design; for the other, it is to point out that order is derived from purely irrational principles, and the divergence which commences with the first step leads on to complete opposition. The two views cannot

¹ Pp. 64, 72.

possibly be combined—one must be allowed and the other denied; and yet the careful reader of the Dialogues will not find them brought forward with the aim of having their respective merits decided. Naturalism is not a system to which Philo is at all inclined to commit himself unreservedly, and his method of discussing it is to point out how very similar its analogies and inferences are to those of theism, and how little argument the adherents of one theory can bring against the other without destroying the validity of their own reasonings. In his conclusions on this point his inconsistency is more plainly marked than elsewhere in the whole book; for while in holding the balance even between naturalism and theism he maintains that “a total suspense of judgment is here our only reasonable resource” (112), and prides himself on having no fixed station or abiding city to defend, his judgment in the end is given, without further trial, in favour of one side.

The parallel which Philo draws between methods and grounds of the two opposing schemes is most complete. We have experience not only of reason as a principle of order in the world, but of other principles—

such as instinct, generation, vegetation, and perhaps a hundred more, which undoubtedly exist, and also do certainly have some degree of a conserving and developing power, such as is required to maintain the great fabric of the whole. The universe resembles a machine, but it also resembles countless objects which are independent of human agency,—a spider's web spun by instinct, a vegetable sprouting up from its seed, an animal developing out of an egg. The resemblances in each case are striking: all of them have commended themselves to the judgment of mankind in history; who, then, shall decide between them? None of the analogies drawn from them pretend to be final, but stop short of defining the ultimate causes of the world. Reason, instinct, vegetation, even Nature, are all alike inexplicable, and no one principle can justly claim a preference to the others.

Philo, therefore, claims the right to be indifferent in choosing whether he will ascribe priority to thought or to matter. Experience can hardly decide the question: abstract reason is not to be trusted, because it is not an impartial judge; no possible touchstone can be brought to bear upon what we observe,

and therefore we ought to ban all speculation, theistic and naturalistic alike.

This negative conclusion of itself sets limits to pure naturalism, but Hume proceeds to show how cautiously, even in the most speculative mood, any advocate of naturalism must approach his questions, and how many dangers beset his most familiar paths. Philo undertakes for a moment to expound that evolutionary theory of order on which modern naturalism is most commonly based—one with which in every age naturalism has been so closely connected as even to be wholly identified with it. It is attempted to ascribe all the multiplicity and adjustment now observable in the world to an origin in the simplest elements possible, and while Philo allows only “a faint appearance of probability” to such a theory, he anticipates its most systematic statement so completely as to expound probably all the essential points in it.

Order is to be evolved out of disorder by blind unreasoning force, and if this can be done the grounds of the theistic inference from design disappear altogether, and only a naturalism or a materialism remains.

Only three elements are demanded for his

new hypothesis of "cosmogony" — matter, motion, and eternity in time. The first two, all sciences hold to be constant in their quantity; we turn to experience, and "there is not probably, at present, in the whole universe, one particle of matter at absolute rest." An infinite duration in time is perhaps only a supposition, but it is a possible one. We turn again to experience, and find that there actually is a system, an order, "an economy of things by which matter can preserve that perpetual agitation which seems essential to it, and yet maintain a constancy in the forms which it produces." With the possibility of infinite transpositions all orders are possible, unstable positions pass away and decay, total or partial chaos ensues, "till finite, though innumerable, revolutions produce at last some forms whose parts and organs are so adjusted as to support the forms amidst a continued succession of matter": the present world, therefore, can be conceived as a stage in the history of matter-seeking form, and "by its very nature that order, when once established, supports itself for many ages, if not to eternity." Possibility and actuality therefore agree; the conclusion is simple.

“Wherever matter is so poised, arranged, and adjusted as to continue in perpetual motion, and yet preserve a constancy in the forms, its situation must of necessity have all the same appearance of art and contrivance which we observe.” If we turn from the inorganic to the organic in Nature, Hume has no theory such as later was used to account for the development of species; but Philo shadows forth that very idea which lies at the root of it, of order being “requisite for the subsistence” of the individual. “It is in vain to insist upon the uses of the parts in animals or vegetables and their curious adjustment to each other. I would fain know how an animal could subsist unless its parts were so adjusted? Do we not find that it immediately perishes whenever this adjustment ceases, and that its matter corrupting tries some new form?”

On this line of argument the theory of the evolution of order in the universe by natural laws of self-development must inevitably dispense with a reference to design, and probably would do so altogether in modern times were it not the case that modern teleology has widened her outlook upon creation, is willing to walk in imagination as far backward along

the course of the world's development as the evolutionist is able to lead her, but only demands that he shall not minimise the nature of the primitive elements, nor ignore the fact that they really *involve* all the multiplicity of adjustment in themselves as truly as their latest combinations do. But whatever may be the true way of reconciling the evolutionary and naturalistic explanation of order with the inference to design, the Dialogues indicate one possible reply to the evolutionary theory by which the need for a reconciliation may be avoided altogether. And because the hypothesis of evolution in the Dialogues is admittedly "incomplete and imperfect," being a side issue "suggested on a sudden in the course of the argument," we have only to state Hume's partial reply to it,—a reply which is perfectly valid in its own place after a century and a half of steady advance in speculation.

The proposition that everything which exists must be subject to order is not convertible directly into this other, that the only purpose of order is to conserve existence. The first is obviously within experience; the second would require confirmation from an analysis of each individual instance of order, and could be dis-

proved by one single case in which order is not an indispensable condition of bare life. Such cases, says Hume, though in general very frugal in Nature, "are far from being rare." He mentions only the physical conveniences and advantages which men possess, but one might add all the æsthetic and intellectual pleasures so profitable, so necessary for the perfection of man's nature, and then ask his question, Without all these "would human society and the human kind have been immediately extinguished?" And one proved instance of order where existence is not made more secure but rather more pleasurable and more complete by it, "is a sufficient proof of design, and of a benevolent design which gave rise to the order and arrangement of the universe." But the whole tenor of the evolutionary hypothesis is that all order, without exception, arises from the natural predisposition of all species that are generative towards the securing of life. Cleanthes does not question that such a power does operate in the world—he only denies that it is sufficient to account for all of the innumerable forms that are made known to us in experience; and Philo allows his contention without hesitation.

With this partial vindication of design against pure naturalism, Hume leaves the question between them apparently undecided. It is not further argued; indeed, Philo's view of it is that no amount of argument can ever completely prove the one or completely discredit the other. If it comes to a question of probability, of balancing the reasons for either side, if it is possible in his own phrase to "believe that the arguments on which a theory of design is established exceed the objections which lie against it,"—if, in fact, a definite conclusion is demanded for common life, as conclusions are demanded every moment on questions less lofty than theology,—then Philo's judgment is not suspended, but becomes a "plain philosophical assent." But that the assent should be so plainly given from the sceptic's side, as it is in the Dialogues, is in itself proof of a distinct positive advance on the speculations of Hume's early years.

There is, however, one point on which the Dialogues yield only a negative result, and strangely enough it is the very argument from the idea of morality which Kant also, excepted from the remainder of his critique of theology, treating it favourably, and en-

deavouring to give it a deeper setting among the necessary postulates of reason. Hume recognises quite fully the need for a conception of God which will harmonise with our highest ethical standards. Cleanthes is made to say expressly, "To what purpose establish the natural attributes of the Deity while the moral are still doubtful and uncertain?" In his desire to complete his theme he would willingly embrace the only method of supporting divine benevolence which he can conceive possible—namely, "to deny absolutely the misery and wickedness of men." But optimism is not a cloak that will fit Hume as it did Leibnitz. The world never presents itself to him at any time as a scene in which the good preponderates over the evil, even in the least degree, much less is it purely and unmixedly good. It is not a picture in which unpleasant shadows and jarring contrasts are used only in order to accentuate the brightness and harmony of the main subject, so that the whole work is one of beauty; it is rather an unfinished daub, parts of which might possibly be praised in isolation, but the greater proportion of its surface ought to be covered up. And there-

fore Cleanthes abandons all claim of moral perfection for God. He is "regulated by wisdom," desires to be benevolent, but is "limited by necessity." The natural operations that we observe at work in life might easily have been bettered by omnipotent goodness, and made more conformable to our conceptions of right without any loss to the other products of design. Four ways of morally amending the present order suggest themselves to our author. Pleasure might be employed to excite all creatures to self-preservation in every case where the present means is pain;¹ general laws might be made less rigid where their effects are cruel and unfair; the powers and faculties for good and happiness might be increased; excessive passions in man and unbridled power in Nature might be regulated and controlled so that all convulsions and revolutions should be impossible. As we read the pages of the Dialogues we seem to hear an echo of the ironical

¹ Only a Paley could base any argument upon the inverse consideration that pleasure seems superadded for purposes which "might have been effected by the operation of pain."—Nat. Theol., chap. xxvi., which is small consolation for the ills of life.

pessimism of Voltaire and Bolingbroke, and they evidently express Hume's confirmed and settled attitude to the worth of life in his mature as in his early years. And Hume saw in the light of dispassionate reason how little there is to suggest the existence of an indulgent fatherly love, ruling the universe with a direct interest in the welfare of its creatures: it is rather "a blind nature impregnated by a great vivifying principle, and pouring forth from her lap, without discernment or parental care, her maimed and abortive children." So far as our experience of reality goes, we cannot lean to any extreme theory of the moral qualities it expresses. We cannot suppose them perfectly good or perfectly bad; we dare not suppose them mixed and opposite, for that means conflict and contradiction; we can only suppose that good and evil are illusions, and that all real things are indifferent.

This antitheistic conclusion (for Hume admits it to be so) is entirely in accordance with his general theory of morals, and his contemporaries were not slow to lay their finger upon the point at issue. All moral judgments for Hume depend upon the natural psychology of man. In political and social ethics we con-

ceive right and wrong only because certain ends are agreed upon, have been customary, and are accepted as such. Certain rules of conduct appear "useful" for these ends, and therefore we distinguish them as being right. In the ethics of the individual, also, we have no reason for making any judgment, except through the arbitrary constitution of the human mind; so that, as Reid says,¹ "by a change in our structure what is immoral might become moral, virtue might be turned into vice, and vice into virtue." The unessential nature of moral distinctions for Hume had already been illustrated in his other writings, notably in that one which bears the title "A Dialogue," and therefore Reid adds justly, "Mr Hume seems perfectly consistent with himself in allowing of no evidence for the moral attributes of the Supreme Being, whatever there may be for His natural attributes." And therefore it is to the nature of his theory of morals that we must trace the motive of his main objection to natural religion.

If, then, in beholding the natural order of the world, Hume is moved to despair, the inward moral order in man cannot bring him

¹ Active Powers, Essay V., chap. vii.

relief. For it, according to him, is arbitrary and fluctuating, and has no independent authority. "What I have said concerning natural evil will apply to moral, with little or no variation; and we have no more reason to infer that the rectitude of the Supreme Being resembles human rectitude than His benevolence resembles the human." And so his negative to the moral argument in natural religion is complete. Probably had his scepticism here been less unmistakably his own reasoned verdict, it might have been taken for a grand satire upon the popular theology of his own day. In it the wretchedness and wickedness of men were favourite topics, and the darkest shadows in Hume's pessimism are bright in comparison to the absolute blackness pictured by orthodox divines when they referred to the estate of sin and misery that resulted from the fall. It was only Hume's fearless logic that warned them of the atheism implied in their moanings: he himself seems content to rest in the conclusion he had drawn from premisses which at least were his own, whether others shared them or not.

In whatever way it may be possible to restate the moral argument, Hume's judgment

of it in the form in which he conceived it is unfavourable. Even the earliest direct reply to the Dialogues, that of Milner in 1781, points out how far Hume's general position in ethics is accountable for this phase of his speculation. Conscience and the very intuitive nature of the moral sense are not taken into his view at all, and yet there are "final causes in the moral world as obvious as in the administration of the natural world."¹ And with the deepening sense of the reality of moral distinctions and moral laws, the nature of the moral argument has changed rapidly in modern times, and the ascription of ethical perfection to God is on every side considered to be an indispensable and essential condition of any expression of belief in Him.

With Hume the consciousness of such a necessity is not present, and in summing up briefly the net result of the Dialogues, we must bear his difficulty carefully in mind. The total of agreement between the two principals is not very great in extent. They both accept the argument from design, and it alone, for all we know of God. They find evidence everywhere of the presence of an active ordering

¹ Milner's Answer, sect. 12.

intelligence, a creative reason, a mind. This is all we *know* of God, and therefore in this form it is we must worship Him. If we are pleased to call Him good, it is with this reservation, that goodness in God is less like goodness as we know it than His reason is like ours. "The moral qualities in man are more defective in their kind than his natural abilities." Analogy, which formerly enabled us to discover the admitted truth, fails us now to describe the moral qualities of God: there is no evidence for them as there undoubtedly is for His designing intelligence. Let us, therefore, call Him Mind, and for the rest keep silence and believe. This is the final message of Hume's latest utterance on the greatest question of the ages. We should be wrong if we claimed that it contained more—unjust if we supposed it contained less.

In their closing paragraphs the Dialogues call us away from the speculations of pure theology to the practical application of divine truth in life. He had as little sympathy as his contemporary, the poet Burns, with the awful doctrines of a God all power and fore-knowledge, ruling by terror of hell and hope of heaven, with "devils and torrents of fire and

brimstone," in which "the damned are infinitely superior in number to the elect,"—all the crude Calvinistic dogma, so prevalent among his fellow-countrymen, from which they hoped to derive some guidance for their conduct in the way. In his opinion it overlooked the importance of the ordinary virtues, neglecting them in order to concentrate attention upon eternal salvation, even holding that they are unessential and unmeaning. To him it serves only as an example of false religion, with consequences pernicious in society and utterly demoralising in the individual; only a little better than no religion at all; a superstition, with a kernel of truth encased in a shell of doctrines that can and ought to be cast away.

For the false Hume would substitute now as the true that conception of religion running through all his writings from the earliest to the latest, according to which we assent to the existence of God, and for the rest give all our energies to the practice of morality. "The proper office of religion is to regulate the heart of men, humanise their conduct, infuse the spirit of temperance, order, and obedience; and as its operation is silent, and only enforces the motives of morality and justice, it is in

danger of being overlooked and confounded with these other motives. When it distinguishes itself, and acts as a separate principle over men, it has departed from its proper sphere, and has become only a cover to faction and ambition.”¹ Not concerned with dogmatising about the many and mysterious attributes of God or the incomprehensible decrees of His Providence, as though some necessity lay upon us to profess complete knowledge of Him, religion is for Hume, in the first place, a simple faith and a present rule of conduct in the present life. It has a certain limited knowledge of God derived by reason working in the realm of experience. No doubts can take that much away; but out beyond there always lies for Hume, when he goes deepest in his search for truth, the realm of faith and revelation. The last word of the Dialogues is a cry for it,—the only refuge for human reason from its ignorance and imperfections. So also ends the Inquiry, so also the Essay on the Immortality

¹ P. 176. Compare with this passage of the Dialogues the following from ‘The History of Great Britain,’ vii. 450: “The proper office of religion is to reform men’s lives, to purify their hearts, to enforce all moral duties, and to secure obedience to the laws of the civil magistrate.”

of the Soul. For religion that has to do with concrete life, lived in the clear sense of God's existence, must surely end either in a claim of perfect knowledge or else in just such a cry. Though Hume nowhere defines these terms of faith and revelation, and nowhere gives an analysis of their use, I see no reason why, in choosing the second of these alternatives, he should be deemed inconsistent or insincere.

And if from the purely historical point of view the closing lines of the Dialogues be considered their author's last utterance in speculation, they may be taken to indicate how, to the very end, the natural man strove with the philosopher in Hume's thought and left him dissatisfied still.

DIALOGUES
CONCERNING
NATURAL RELIGION

DIALOGUES

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NATURAL RELIGION.

PAMPHILUS TO HERMIPPUS.

IT has been remarked, my Hermippus, that, though the ancient philosophers conveyed most of their instruction in the form of dialogue, this method of composition has been little practised in later ages, and has seldom succeeded in the hands of those, who have attempted it. Accurate and regular argument, indeed, such as is now expected of philosophical enquirers, naturally throws a man into the methodical and didactic manner; where he can immediately, without preparation, explain the point, at which he aims; and thence proceed, without interruption, to deduce the proofs, on which it is established. To deliver a SYSTEM in con-

versation scarcely appears natural; and while the dialogue-writer desires, by departing from the direct style of composition, to give a freer air to his performance, and avoid the appearance of *Author* and *Reader*, he is apt to run into a worse inconvenience, and convey the image of *Pedagogue* and *Pupil*. Or if he carries on the dispute in the natural spirit of good company, by throwing in a variety of topics, and preserving a proper balance among the speakers; he often loses so much time in preparations and transitions, that the reader will scarcely think himself compensated, by all the graces of dialogue, for the order, brevity, and precision, which are sacrificed to them.

There are some subjects, however, to which dialogue-writing is peculiarly adapted, and where it is still preferable to the direct and simple method of composition.

Any point of doctrine, which is so *obvious*, that it scarcely admits of dispute, but at the same time so *important*, that it cannot be too often inculcated, seems to require some such method of handling it; where the novelty of the manner may compensate the triteness of the subject, where the vivacity of conversation may enforce the precept, and where the

variety of lights, presented by various personages and characters, may appear neither tedious nor redundant.

Any question of philosophy, on the other hand, which is so *obscure* and *uncertain*, that human reason can reach no fixed determination with regard to it; if it should be treated at all; seems to lead us naturally into the style of dialogue and conversation. Reasonable men may be allowed to differ, where no one can reasonably be positive: Opposite sentiments, even without any decision, afford an agreeable amusement: and if the subject be curious and interesting, the book carries us, in a manner, into company; and unites the two greatest and purest pleasures of human life, study and society.

Happily, these circumstances are all to be found in the subject of NATURAL RELIGION. What truth so obvious, so certain, as the BEING of a God, which the most ignorant ages have acknowledged, for which the most refined geniuses have ambitiously striven to produce new proofs and arguments? What truth so important as this, which is the ground of all our hopes, the surest foundation of morality, the firmest support of society, and the only

principle, which ought never to be a moment absent from our thoughts and meditations? But in treating of this obvious and important truth; what obscure questions occur, concerning the NATURE of that divine being; his attributes, his decrees, his plan of providence? These have been always subjected to the disputations of men: Concerning these, human reason has not reached any certain determination: But these are topics so interesting, that we cannot restrain our restless enquiry with regard to them; though nothing but doubt, uncertainty and contradiction, have, as yet, been the result of our most accurate researches.

This I had lately occasion to observe, while I passed, as usual, part of the summer season with CLEANTHES, and was present at those conversations of his with PHILO and DEMEA, of which I gave you lately some imperfect account. Your curiosity, you then told me, was so excited, that I must of necessity enter into a more exact detail of their reasonings, and display those various systems, which they advanced with regard to so delicate a subject as that of Natural Religion. The remarkable contrast in their characters still farther raised your expectations; while you opposed the ac-

curate philosophical turn of CLEANTHES to the careless scepticism of PHILO, or compared either of their dispositions with the rigid inflexible orthodoxy of DEMEA. My youth rendered me a mere auditor of their disputes; and that curiosity, natural to the early season of life, has so deeply imprinted in my memory the whole chain and connection of their arguments, that, I hope, I shall not omit or confound any considerable part of them in the recital.

PART I.

AFTER I joined the company, whom I found sitting in CLEANTHES'S library, DEMEA paid CLEANTHES some compliments, on the great care which he took of my education, and on his unwearied perseverance and constancy in all his friendships. The father of PAMPHILUS, said he, was your intimate friend: The son is your pupil, and may indeed be regarded as your adopted son; were we to judge by the pains which you bestow in conveying to him every useful branch of literature and science. You are no more wanting, I am persuaded, in prudence than in industry. I shall, therefore, communicate to you a maxim, which I have observed with regard to my own children, that I may learn how far it agrees with your practice. The method I follow in their education is founded on the saying of an ancient, 'That students of philosophy ought first to learn Logics, then Ethics, next Physics, last of all,

of the Nature of the Gods.’¹ This science of Natural Theology, according to him, being the most profound and abstruse of any, required the maturest judgment in its students; and none but a mind, enriched with all the other sciences, can safely be entrusted with it.

Are you so late, says PHILO, in teaching your children the principles of religion? Is there no danger of their neglecting or rejecting altogether those opinions, of which they have heard so little, during the whole course of their education? It is only as a science, replied DEMEA, subjected to human reasoning and disputation, that I postpone the study of Natural Theology. To season their minds with early piety is my chief care; and by continual precept and instruction, and I hope too, by example, I imprint deeply on their tender minds an habitual reverence for all the principles of religion. While they pass through every other science, I still remark the uncertainty of each part, the eternal disputations of men, the obscurity of all philosophy, and the strange, ridiculous conclusions, which some of the greatest geniuses have derived from the principles of mere human reason. Having thus

¹ Chrysippus apud Plut. de repug. Stoicorum.

tamed their mind to a proper submission and self-diffidence, I have no longer any scruple of opening to them the greatest mysteries of religion, nor apprehend any danger from that assuming arrogance of philosophy, which may lead them to reject the most established doctrines and opinions.

Your precaution, says PHILO, of seasoning your children's minds with early piety, is certainly very reasonable; and no more than is requisite, in this profane and irreligious age. But what I chiefly admire in your plan of education, is your method of drawing advantage from the very principles of philosophy and learning, which, by inspiring pride, and self-sufficiency, have commonly, in all ages, been found so destructive to the principles of religion. The vulgar, indeed, we may remark, who are unacquainted with science and profound inquiry, observing the endless disputes of the learned, have commonly a thorough contempt for Philosophy; and rivet themselves the faster, by that means, in the great points of Theology, which have been taught them. Those, who enter a little into study and enquiry, finding many appearances of evidence in doctrines the newest and most extra-

ordinary, think nothing too difficult for human reason ; and presumptuously breaking through all fences, profane the inmost sanctuaries of the temple. But CLEANTHES will, I hope, agree with me, that, after we have abandoned ignorance, the surest remedy, there is still one expedient left to prevent this profane liberty. Let DEMEA's principles be improved and cultivated : Let us become thoroughly sensible of the weakness, blindness, and narrow limits of human reason : Let us duly consider its uncertainty and endless contrarieties, even in subjects of common life and practice : Let the errors and deceits of our very senses be set before us ; the insuperable difficulties, which attend first principles in all systems ; the contradictions, which adhere to the very ideas of matter, cause and effect, extension, space, time, motion ; and in a word, quantity of all kinds, the object of the only science, that can fairly pretend to any certainty or evidence. When these topics are displayed in their full light, as they are by some philosophers and almost all divines ; who can retain such confidence in this frail faculty of reason as to pay any regard to its determinations in points so sublime, so abstruse, so remote from common

life and experience? When the coherence of the parts of a stone, or even that composition of parts, which renders it extended; when these familiar objects, I say, are so inexplicable, and contain circumstances so repugnant and contradictory; with what assurance can we decide concerning the origin of worlds, or trace their history from eternity to eternity?

While PHILO pronounced these words, I could observe a smile in the countenances both of DEMEA and CLEANTHES. That of DEMEA seemed to imply an unreserved satisfaction in the doctrines delivered: But in CLEANTHES'S features, I could distinguish an air of finesse; as if he perceived some raillery or artificial malice in the reasonings of PHILO.

7 You propose then, PHILO, said CLEANTHES, to erect religious faith on philosophical scepticism; and you think, that if certainty or evidence be expelled from every other subject of enquiry, it will all retire to these theological doctrines, and there acquire a superior force and authority. Whether your scepticism be as absolute and sincere as you pretend, we shall learn by and by, when the company breaks up: We shall then see, whether you go out at the door or the window; and

whether you really doubt, if your body has gravity, or can be injured by its fall; according to popular opinion, derived from our fallacious senses and more fallacious experience. And this consideration, DEMEA, may, I think, fairly serve to abate our ill-will to this humourous sect of the sceptics. If they be thoroughly in earnest, they will not long trouble the world with their doubts, cavils, and disputes: If they be only in jest, they are, perhaps, bad ralliers, but can never be very dangerous, either to the state, to philosophy, or to religion.

In reality, PHILO, continued he, it seems certain, that though a man, in a flush of humour, after intense reflection on the many contradictions and imperfections of human reason, may entirely renounce all belief and opinion; it is impossible for him to persevere in this total scepticism, or make it appear in his conduct for a few hours. External objects press in upon him: Passions solicit him: His philosophical melancholy dissipates; and even the utmost violence upon his own temper will not be able, during any time, to preserve the poor appearance of scepticism. And for what reason impose on himself such a violence?

This is a point, in which it will be impossible for him ever to satisfy himself, consistent with his sceptical principles: So that upon the whole nothing could be more ridiculous than the principles of the ancient PYRRHONIANS; if in reality they endeavoured, as is pretended, to extend throughout, the same scepticism, which they had learned from the declamations of their schools, and which they ought to have confined to them.

1 In this view, there appears a great resemblance between the sects of the STOICS and PYRRHONIANS, though perpetual antagonists: and both of them seem founded on this erroneous maxim, That what a man can perform sometimes, and in some dispositions, he can perform always, and in every disposition. When the mind, by Stoical reflections, is elevated into a sublime enthusiasm of virtue, and strongly smit with any *species* of honour or public good, the utmost bodily pain and sufferance will not prevail over such a high sense of duty; and 'tis possible, perhaps, by its means, even to smile and exult in the midst of tortures. If this sometimes may be the case in fact and reality, much more may a philosopher, in his school, or even in his

closet, work himself up to such an enthusiasm, and support in imagination the acutest pain or most calamitous event, which he can possibly conceive. But how shall he support this enthusiasm itself? The bent of his mind relaxes, and cannot be recalled at pleasure: Avocations lead him astray: Misfortunes attack him unawares: and the *philosopher* sinks by degrees into the *plebeian*.

I allow of your comparison between the STOICS and SCEPTICS, replied PHILO. But you may observe, at the same time, that though the mind cannot, in Stoicism, support the highest flights of philosophy, yet even when it sinks lower, it still retains somewhat of its former disposition; and the effects of the Stoic's reasoning will appear in his conduct in common life, and through the whole tenor of his actions. The ancient schools, particularly that of ZENO, produced examples of virtue and constancy which seem astonishing to present times.

Vain Wisdom all and false Philosophy.
Yet with a pleasing sorcery could charm
Pain, for a while, or anguish, and excite
Fallacious Hope, or arm the obdurate breast
With stubborn Patience, as with triple steel.¹

¹ Paradise Lost, II.

In like manner, if a man has accustomed himself to sceptical considerations on the uncertainty and narrow limits of reason, he will not entirely forget them when he turns his reflection on other subjects; but in all his philosophical principles and reasoning, I dare not say, in his common conduct, he will be found different from those, who either never formed any opinions in the case, or have entertained sentiments more favourable to human reason.

To whatever length any one may push his speculative principles of scepticism, he must act, I own, and live, and converse like other men; and for this conduct he is not obliged to give any other reason than the absolute necessity he lies under of so doing. If he ever carries his speculations farther than this necessity constrains him, and philosophises, either on natural or moral subjects, he is allured by a certain pleasure and satisfaction, which he finds in employing himself after that manner. He considers besides, that every one, even in common life, is constrained to have more or less of this philosophy; that from our earliest infancy we make continual advances in forming more general principles of

conduct and reasoning; that the larger experience we acquire, and the stronger reason we are endued with, we always render our principles the more general and comprehensive; and that what we call *philosophy* is nothing but a more regular and methodical operation of the same kind. To philosophise on such subjects is nothing essentially different from reasoning on common life; and we may only expect greater stability, if not greater truth, from our philosophy, on account of its exacter and more scrupulous method of proceeding.

But when we look beyond human affairs and the properties of the surrounding bodies: When we carry our speculations into the two eternities, before and after the present state of things; into the creation and formation of the universe; the existence and properties of spirits; the powers and operations of one universal spirit, existing without beginning and without end; omnipotent, omniscient, immutable, infinite, and incomprehensible: We must be far removed from the smallest tendency to scepticism not to be apprehensive, that we have here got quite beyond the reach of our faculties. So long as we confine our specu-

lations to trade, or morals, or politics, or criticism, we make appeals, every moment, to common sense and experience, which strengthen our philosophical conclusions, and remove (at least, in part) the suspicion, which we so justly entertain with regard to every reasoning, that is very subtle and refined. But in theological reasonings, we have not this advantage; while at the same time we are employed upon objects, which, we must be sensible, are too large for our grasp, and of all others, require most to be familiarised to our apprehension. We are like foreigners in a strange country, to whom everything must seem suspicious, and who are in danger every moment of transgressing against the laws and customs of the people, with whom they live and converse. We know not how far we ought to trust our vulgar methods of reasoning in such a subject; since, even in common life and in that province, which is peculiarly appropriated to them, we cannot account for them, and are entirely guided by a kind of instinct or necessity in employing them.

All sceptics pretend, that, if reason be considered in an abstract view, it furnishes invincible arguments against itself, and that

we could never retain any conviction or assurance, on any subject, were not the sceptical reasonings so refined and subtile, that they are not able to counterpoise the more solid and more natural arguments, derived from the senses and experience. But it is evident, whenever our arguments lose this advantage, and run wide of common life, that the most refined scepticism comes to be upon a footing with them, and is able to oppose and counterbalance them. The one has no more weight than the other. The mind must remain in suspense between them; and it is that very suspense or balance, which is the triumph of scepticism.

But I observe, says CLEANTHES, with regard to you, PHILO, and all speculative sceptics, that your doctrine and practice are as much at variance in the most abstruse points of theory as in the conduct of common life. Wherever evidence discovers itself, you adhere to it, notwithstanding your pretended scepticism; and I can observe, too, some of your sect to be as decisive as those, who make greater professions of certainty and assurance. In reality, would not a man be ridiculous, who pretended to reject NEWTON's explication

of the wonderful phenomenon of the rainbow, because that explication gives a minute anatomy of the rays of light; a subject, forsooth, too refined for human comprehension? And what would you say to one, who having nothing particular to object to the arguments of COPERNICUS and GALILÆO for the motion of the earth, should withhold his assent, on that general principle, That these subjects were too magnificent and remote to be explained by the narrow and fallacious reason of mankind?

There is indeed a kind of brutish and ignorant scepticism, as you well observed, which gives the vulgar a general prejudice against what they do not easily understand, and makes them reject every principle, which requires elaborate reasoning to prove and establish it. This species of scepticism is fatal to knowledge, not to religion; since we find, that those who make greatest profession of it, give often their assent, not only to the great truths of Theism, and natural theology, but even to the most absurd tenets, which a traditional superstition has recommended to them. They firmly believe in witches; though they will not believe nor attend to the most simple proposition of Euclid. But the refined

and philosophical sceptics fall into an inconsistency of an opposite nature. They push their researches into the most abstruse corners of science; and their assent attends them in every step, proportioned to the evidence which they meet with. They are even obliged to acknowledge, that the most abstruse and remote objects are those, which are best explained by philosophy. Light is in reality anatomized: The true system of the heavenly bodies is discovered and ascertained. But the nourishment of bodies by food is still an inexplicable mystery: The cohesion of the parts of matter is still incomprehensible. These sceptics, therefore, are obliged, in every question, to consider each particular evidence apart, and proportion their assent to the precise degree of evidence, which occurs. This is their practice in all natural, mathematical, moral, and political science. And why not the same, I ask, in the theological and religious? Why must conclusions of this nature be alone rejected on the general presumption of the insufficiency of human reason, without any particular discussion of the evidence? Is not such an unequal conduct a plain proof of prejudice and passion?

Our senses, you say, are fallacious, our understanding erroneous, our ideas even of the most familiar objects, extension, duration, motion, full of absurdities and contradictions. You defy me to solve the difficulties, or reconcile the repugnances, which you discover in them. I have not capacity for so great an undertaking: I have not leisure for it: I perceive it to be superfluous. Your own conduct, in every circumstance, refutes your principles; and shows the firmest reliance on all the received maxims of science, morals, prudence, and behaviour.

I shall never assent to so harsh an opinion as that of a celebrated writer,¹ who says, that the sceptics are not a sect of philosophers: They are only a sect of liars. I may, however, affirm (I hope without offence), that they are a sect of jesters or ralliers. But for my part, whenever I find myself disposed to mirth and amusement, I shall certainly chuse my entertainment of a less perplexing and abstruse nature. A comedy, a novel, or at most a history, seems a more natural recreation than such metaphysical subtilties and abstractions.

In vain would the sceptic make a distinction

¹ L'art de penser.

between science and common life, or between one science and another. The arguments, employed in all, if just, are of a similar nature, and contain the same force and evidence. Or if there be any difference among them, the advantage lies entirely on the side of theology and natural religion. Many principles of mechanics are founded on very abstruse reasoning ; yet no man, who has any pretensions to science, even no speculative sceptic, pretends to entertain the least doubt with regard to them. The COPERNICAN system contains the most surprising paradox, and the most contrary to our natural conceptions, to appearances, and to our very senses : yet even monks and inquisitors are now constrained to withdraw their opposition to it. And shall PHILO, a man of so liberal a genius, and extensive knowledge, entertain any general undistinguished scruples with regard to the religious hypothesis, which is founded on the simplest and most obvious arguments, and, unless it meet with artificial obstacles, has such easy access and admission into the mind of man ?

And here we may observe, continued he, turning himself towards DEMEA, a pretty curious circumstance in the history of the sciences.

After the union of philosophy with the popular religion, upon the first establishment of Christianity, nothing was more usual, among all religious teachers, than declamations against reason, against the senses, against every principle, derived merely from human research and enquiry. All the topics of the ancient Academics were adopted by the Fathers; and thence propagated for several ages in every school and pulpit throughout Christendom. The Reformers embraced the same principles of reasoning, or rather declamation; and all panegyrics on the excellency of faith were sure to be interlarded with some severe strokes of satire against natural reason. A celebrated prelate too,¹ of the Romish communion, a man of the most extensive learning, who wrote a demonstration of Christianity, has also composed a treatise, which contains all the cavils of the boldest and most determined PYRRHONISM. LOCKE seems to have been the first Christian, who ventured openly to assert, that *faith* was nothing but a species of *reason*, that religion was only a branch of philosophy, and that a chain of arguments, similar to that which established any truth in morals, politics,

¹ Mons. Huet.

or physics, was always employed in discovering all the principles of theology, natural and revealed. The ill use, which BAYLE and other libertines made of the philosophical scepticism of the fathers and first reformers, still farther propagated the judicious sentiment of Mr LOCKE: and it is now, in a manner, avowed, by all pretenders to reasoning and philosophy, that Atheist and Sceptic are almost synonymous. And as it is certain, that no man is in earnest, when he professes the latter principle; I would fain hope that there are as few, who seriously maintain the former.

Don't you remember, said PHILO, the excellent saying of Lord BACON on this head? That a little philosophy, replied CLEANTHES, makes a man an Atheist: a great deal converts him to religion. That is a very judicious remark too, said PHILO. But what I have in my eye is another passage, where, having mentioned DAVID's fool, who said in his heart there is no God, this great philosopher observes, that the Atheists now a days have a double share of folly: for they are not contented to say in their hearts there is no God, but they also utter that impiety with their lips, and are thereby guilty of multiplied indiscre-

tion and imprudence. Such people, though they were ever so much in earnest, cannot, methinks, be very formidable.

But though you should rank me in this class of fools, I cannot forbear communicating a remark, that occurs to me, from the history of the religious and irreligious scepticism, with which you have entertained us. It appears to me, that there are strong symptoms of priest-craft in the whole progress of this affair. During ignorant ages, such as those which followed the dissolution of the ancient schools, the priests perceived, that Atheism, Deism, or heresy of any kind, could only proceed from the presumptuous questioning of received opinions, and from a belief, that human reason was equal to everything. Education had then a mighty influence over the minds of men, and was almost equal in force to those suggestions of the senses and common understanding, by which the most determined sceptic must allow himself to be governed. But at present, when the influence of education is much diminished, and men, from a more open commerce of the world, have learned to compare the popular principles of different nations and ages, our sagacious divines have changed

their whole system of philosophy, and talk the language of STOICS, PLATONISTS, and PERIPATETICS, not that of PYRRHONIANS and ACADEMICS. If we distrust human reason, we have now no other principle to lead us into religion. Thus, sceptics in one age, dogmatists in another; whichever system best suits the purpose of these reverend gentlemen, in giving them an ascendant over mankind, they are sure to make it their favourite principle, and established tenet.

It is very natural, said CLEANTHES, for men to embrace those principles, by which they find they can best defend their doctrines; nor need we have any recourse to priestcraft to account for so reasonable an expedient. And surely nothing can afford a stronger presumption, that any set of principles are true, and ought to be embraced, than to observe, that they tend to the confirmation of true religion, and serve to confound the cavils of Atheists, Libertines, and Freethinkers of all denominations.

PART II.

I MUST own, CLEANTHES, said DEMEA, that nothing can more surprise me, than the light, in which you have, all along, put this argument. By the whole tenor of your discourse, one would imagine that you were maintaining the Being of a God, against the cavils of Atheists and Infidels; and were necessitated to become a champion for that fundamental principle of all religion. But this, I hope, is not by any means a question among us. No man; no man, at least, of common sense, I am persuaded, ever entertained a serious doubt with regard to a truth, so certain and self-evident. The question is not concerning the BEING, but the NATURE of GOD. This, I affirm, from the infirmities of human understanding, to be altogether incomprehensible and unknown to us. The essence of that supreme mind, his attributes, the manner of his existence, the very nature of his duration; these

and every particular, which regards so divine a Being, are mysterious to men. Finite, weak, and blind creatures, we ought to humble ourselves in his august presence, and, conscious of our frailties, adore in silence his infinite perfections, which eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man to conceive them. They are covered in a deep cloud from human curiosity: It is profaneness to attempt penetrating through these sacred obscurities: And next to the impiety of denying his existence, is the temerity of prying into his nature and essence, decrees and attributes.

But lest you should think, that my *piety* has here got the better of my *philosophy*, I shall support my opinion, if it needs any support, by a very great authority. I might cite all the divines almost, from the foundation of Christianity, who have ever treated of this or any other theological subject: But I shall confine myself, at present, to one equally celebrated for piety and philosophy. It is Father MALEBRANCHE, who, I remember, thus expresses himself.¹ ‘One ought not so much (says he) to call God a spirit, in order to express positively

¹ Recherche de la Vérité, liv. 3, chap. 9.

what he is, as in order to signify that he is not matter. He is a Being infinitely perfect: Of this we cannot doubt. But in the same manner as we ought not to imagine, even supposing him corporeal, that he is clothed with a human body, as the ANTHROPOMORPHITES asserted, under colour that that figure was the most perfect of any; so neither ought we to imagine, that the Spirit of God has human ideas, or bears *any* resemblance to our spirit; under colour that we know nothing more perfect than a human mind. We ought rather to believe, that as he comprehends the perfections of matter without being material . . . he comprehends also the perfections of created spirits, without being spirit, in the manner we conceive spirit: That his true name is, *He that is*, or, in other words, Being without restriction, All Being, the Being infinite and universal.'

After so great an authority, DEMEA, replied PHILO, as that which you have produced, and a thousand more, which you might produce, it would appear ridiculous in me to add my sentiment, or express my approbation of your doctrine. But surely, where reasonable men treat these subjects, the question can never be concerning the *Being*, but only the *Nature* of

the Deity. The former truth, as you well observe, is unquestionable and self-evident. Nothing exists without a cause; and the original cause of this universe (whatever it be) we call GOD; and piously ascribe to him every species of perfection. Whoever scruples this fundamental truth, deserves every punishment, which can be inflicted among philosophers, to wit, the greatest ridicule, contempt and disapprobation. But as all perfection is entirely relative, we ought never to imagine, that we comprehend the attributes of this divine Being, or to suppose, that his perfections have any analogy or likeness to the perfections of a human creature. Wisdom, Thought, Design, Knowledge; these we justly ascribe to him; because these words are honourable among men, and we have no other language or other conceptions, by which we can express our adoration of him. But let us beware, lest we think, that our ideas any wise correspond to his perfections, or that his attributes have any resemblance to these qualities among men. He is infinitely superior to our limited view and comprehension; and is more the object of worship in the temple, than of disputation in the schools.

In reality, CLEANTHES, continued he, there is no need of having recourse to that affected scepticism, so displeasing to you, in order to come at this determination. Our ideas reach no farther than our experience: We have no experience of divine attributes and operations: I need not conclude my syllogism: You can draw the inference yourself. And it is a pleasure to me (and I hope to you too) that just reasoning and sound piety here concur in the same conclusion, and both of them establish the adorably mysterious and incomprehensible nature of the Supreme Being.

Not to lose any time in circumlocutions, said CLEANTHES, addressing himself to DEMEA, much less in replying to the pious declamations of PHILO; I shall briefly explain how I conceive this matter. Look round the world: contemplate the whole and every part of it: You will find it to be nothing but one great machine, subdivided into an infinite number of lesser machines, which again admit of subdivisions, to a degree beyond what human senses and faculties can trace and explain. All these various machines, and even their most minute parts, are adjusted to each other with an accuracy, which ravishes into admiration all

men, who have ever contemplated them. The curious adapting of means to ends, throughout all nature, resembles exactly, though it much exceeds, the productions of human contrivance; of human design, thought, wisdom, and intelligence. Since therefore the effects resemble each other, we are led to infer, by all the rules of analogy, that the causes also resemble; and that the Author, of Nature is somewhat similar to the mind of man; though possessed of much larger faculties, proportioned to the grandeur of the work, which he has executed. By this argument *a posteriori*, and by this argument alone, do we prove at once the existence of a Deity, and his similarity to human mind and intelligence.

I shall be so free, CLEANTHES, said DEMEA, as to tell you, that from the beginning, I could not approve of your conclusion concerning the similarity of the Deity to men; still less can I approve of the mediums, by which you endeavour to establish it. What! No demonstration of the Being of a God! No abstract arguments! No proofs *a priori*! Are these, which have hitherto been so much insisted on by philosophers, all fallacy, all sophism? Can we reach no farther in this subject than ex-

perience and probability? I will not say, that this is betraying the cause of a deity: But surely, by this affected candour, you give advantage to Atheists, which they never could obtain, by the mere dint of argument and reasoning.

What I chiefly scruple in this subject, said PHILO, is not so much, that all religious arguments are by CLEANTHES reduced to experience, as that they appear not to be even the most certain and irrefragable of that inferior kind. That a stone will fall, that fire will burn, that the earth has solidity, we have observed a thousand and a thousand times; and when any new instance of this nature is presented, we draw without hesitation the accustomed inference. The exact similarity of the cases gives us a perfect assurance of a similar event; and a stronger evidence is never desired nor sought after. But wherever you depart, in the least, from the similarity of the cases, you diminish proportionably the evidence; and may at last bring it to a very weak *analogy*, which is confessedly liable to error and uncertainty. After having experienced the circulation of the blood in human creatures, we make no doubt that it takes place in Titius

and Mævius: but from its circulation in frogs and fishes, it is only a presumption, though a strong one, from analogy, that it takes place in men and other animals. The analogical reasoning is much weaker, when we infer the circulation of the sap in vegetables from our experience, that the blood circulates in animals; and those, who hastily followed that imperfect analogy, are found, by more accurate experiments, to have been mistaken.

If we see a house, CLEANTHES, we conclude, with the greatest certainty, that it had an architect or builder; because this is precisely that species of effect, which we have experienced to proceed from that species of cause. But surely you will not affirm, that the universe bears such a resemblance to a house, that we can with the same certainty infer a similar cause, or that the analogy is here entire and perfect. The dissimilitude is so striking, that the utmost you can here pretend to is a guess, a conjecture, a presumption concerning a similar cause; and how that pretension will be received in the world, I leave you to consider.

It would surely be very ill received, replied CLEANTHES; and I should be deservedly blamed

and detested, did I allow, that the proofs of a Deity amounted to no more than a guess or conjecture. But is the whole adjustment of means to ends in a house and in the universe so slight a resemblance? The œconomy of final causes? The order, proportion, and arrangement of every part? Steps of a stair are plainly contrived, that human legs may use them in mounting; and this inference is certain and infallible. Human legs are also contrived for walking and mounting; and this inference, I allow, is not altogether so certain, because of the dissimilarity which you remark; but does it, therefore, deserve the name only of presumption or conjecture?

Good God! cried DEMEA, interrupting him, where are we? Zealous defenders of religion allow, that the proofs of a Deity fall short of perfect evidence! And you, PHILO, on whose assistance I depended, in proving the adorable mysteriousness of the Divine Nature, do you assent to all these extravagant opinions of CLEANTHES? For what other name can I give them? Or why spare my censure, when such principles are advanced, supported by such an authority, before so young a man as PAMPHILUS?

You seem not to apprehend, replied PHILO, that I argue with CLEANTHES in his own way; and by showing him the dangerous consequences of his tenets, hope at last to reduce him to our opinion. But what sticks most with you, I observe, is the representation which CLEANTHES has made of the argument *a posteriori*; and finding, that that argument is likely to escape your hold and vanish into air, you think it so disguised, that you can scarcely believe it to be set in its true light. Now, however much I may dissent, in other respects, from the dangerous principles of CLEANTHES, I must allow, that he has fairly represented that argument; and I shall endeavour so to state the matter to you, that you will entertain no farther scruples with regard to it.

Were a man to abstract from every thing which he knows or has seen, he would be altogether incapable, merely from his own ideas, to determine what kind of scene the universe must be, or to give the preference to one state or situation of things above another. For as nothing which he clearly conceives, could be esteemed impossible or implying a contradiction, every chimera of

his fancy would be upon an equal footing; nor could he assign any just reason, why he adheres to one idea or system, and rejects the others, which are equally possible.

Again; after he opens his eyes, and contemplates the world, as it really is, it would be impossible for him, at first, to assign the cause of any one event; much less, of the whole of things or of the universe. He might set his Fancy a rambling; and she might bring him in an infinite variety of reports and representations. These would all be possible; but being all equally possible, he would never, of himself, give a satisfactory account for his preferring one of them to the rest. Experience alone can point out to him the true cause of any phenomenon.

Now, according to this method of reasoning, DEMEA, it follows (and is, indeed, tacitly allowed by CLEANTHES himself) that order, arrangement, or the adjustment of final causes is not, of itself, any proof of design; but only so far as it has been experienced to proceed from that principle. For aught we can know *a priori*, matter may contain the source or spring of order originally, within itself, as well as mind does; and there is no more

difficulty in conceiving, that the several elements, from an internal unknown cause, may fall into the most exquisite arrangement, than to conceive that their ideas, in the great, universal mind, from a like internal, unknown cause, fall into that arrangement. The equal possibility of both these suppositions is allowed. But by experience we find (according to CLEANTHES), that there is a difference between them. Throw several pieces of steel together, without shape or form; they will never arrange themselves so as to compose a watch: Stone, and mortar, and wood, without an architect, never erect a house. But the ideas in a human mind, we see, by an unknown, inexplicable œconomy, arrange themselves so as to form the plan of a watch or house. Experience, therefore, proves, that there is an original principle of order in mind, not in matter. From similar effects we infer similar causes. The adjustment of means to ends is alike in the universe, as in a machine of human contrivance. The causes, therefore, must be resembling.

I was from the beginning scandalised, I must own, with this resemblance, which is asserted, between the Deity and human

creatures; and must conceive it to imply such a degradation of the Supreme Being as no sound Theist could endure. With your assistance, therefore, Demea, I shall endeavour to defend what you justly called the adorable mysteriousness of the Divine Nature, and shall refute this reasoning of CLEANTHES, provided he allows, that I have made a fair representation of it.

When CLEANTHES had assented, PHILO, after a short pause, proceeded in the following manner.

That all inferences, CLEANTHES, concerning fact, are founded on experience, and that all experimental reasonings are founded on the supposition, that similar causes prove similar effects, and similar effects similar causes; I shall not, at present, much dispute with you. But observe, I entreat you, with what extreme caution all just reasoners proceed in the transferring of experiments to similar cases. Unless the cases be exactly similar, they repose no perfect confidence in applying their past observation to any particular phenomenon. Every alteration of circumstances occasions a doubt concerning the event; and it requires new experiments to prove certainly, that the

new circumstances are of no moment or importance. A change in bulk, situation, arrangement, age, disposition of the air, or surrounding bodies; any of these particulars may be attended with the most unexpected consequences: And unless the objects be quite familiar to us, it is the highest temerity to expect with assurance, after any of these changes, an event similar to that which before fell under our observation. The slow and deliberate steps of philosophers, here, if any where, are distinguished from the precipitate march of the vulgar, who, hurried on by the smallest similitudes, are incapable of all discernment or consideration.

But can you think, CLEANTHES, that your usual phlegm and philosophy have been preserved in so wide a step as you have taken, when you compared to the universe, houses, ships, furniture, machines; and from their similarity in some circumstances inferred a similarity in their causes? Thought, design, intelligence, such as we discover in men and other animals, is no more than one of the springs and principles of the universe, as well as heat or cold, attraction or repulsion, and a hundred others, which fall under daily observa-

7 tion. It is an active cause, by which some particular parts of nature, we find, produce alterations on other parts. But can a conclusion, with any propriety, be transferred from parts to the whole? Does not the great disproportion bar all comparison and inference? From observing the growth of a hair, can we learn any thing concerning the generation of a man? Would the manner of a leaf's blowing, even though perfectly known, afford us any instruction concerning the vegetation of a tree?

But allowing that we were to take the *operations* of one part of nature upon another for the foundation of our judgment concerning the *origin* of the whole (which never can be admitted), yet why select so minute, so weak, so bounded a principle as the reason and design of animals is found to be upon this planet? What peculiar privilege has this little agitation of the brain which we call *thought*, that we must thus make it the model of the whole universe? Our partiality in our own favour does indeed present it on all occasions; but sound philosophy ought carefully to guard against so natural an illusion.

So far from admitting, continued PHILO, that

the operations of a part can afford us any just conclusion concerning the origin of the whole, I will not allow any one part to form a rule for another part, if the latter be very remote from the former. Is there any reasonable ground to conclude, that the inhabitants of other planets possess thought, intelligence, reason, or any thing similar to these faculties in men? When Nature has so extremely diversified her manner of operation in this small globe; can we imagine, that she incessantly copies herself throughout so immense a universe? And if thought, as we may well suppose, be confined merely to this narrow corner, and has even there so limited a sphere of action; with what propriety can we assign it for the original cause of all things? The narrow views of a peasant, who makes his domestic œconomy the rule for the government of kingdoms, is in comparison a pardonable sophism.

But were we ever so much assured, that a thought and reason, resembling the human, were to be found throughout the whole universe, and were its activity elsewhere vastly greater and more commanding than it appears in this globe; yet I cannot see, why the

operations of a world, constituted, arranged, adjusted, can with any propriety be extended to a world, which is in its embryo-state, and is advancing towards that constitution and arrangement. By observation, we know somewhat of the œconomy, action, and nourishment of a finished animal; but we must transfer with great caution that observation to the growth of a foetus in the womb, and still more, to the formation of an animalcule in the loins of its male parent. Nature, we find, even from our limited experience, possesses an infinite number of springs and principles, which incessantly discover themselves on every change of her position and situation. And what new and unknown principles would actuate her in so new and unknown a situation as that of the formation of a universe, we cannot, without the utmost temerity, pretend to determine.

A very small part of this great system, during a very short time, is very imperfectly discovered to us: and do we thence pronounce decisively concerning the origin of the whole?

Admirable conclusion! Stone, wood, brick, iron, brass, have not, at this time, in this minute globe of earth, an order or arrange-

ment without human art and contrivance: therefore the universe could not originally attain its order and arrangement, without something similar to human art. But is a part of nature a rule for another part very wide of the former? Is it a rule for the whole? Is a very small part a rule for the universe? Is nature in one situation, a certain rule for nature in another situation, vastly different from the former?

And can you blame me, CLEANTHES, if I here imitate the prudent reserve of SIMONIDES, who, according to the noted story, being asked by HIERO, *What God was?* desired a day to think of it, and then two days more; and after that manner continually prolonged the term, without ever bringing in his definition or description? Could you even blame me, if I had answered at first *that I did not know*, and was sensible that this subject lay vastly beyond the reach of my faculties? You might cry out sceptic and rallier as much as you pleased: but having found, in so many other subjects, much more familiar, the imperfections and even contradictions of human reason, I never should expect any success from its feeble conjectures, in a subject, so sublime, and so

remote from the sphere of our observation. When two *species* of objects have always been observed to be conjoined together, I can *infer*, by custom, the existence of one wherever I *see* the existence of the other: and this I call an argument from experience. But how this argument can have place, where the objects, as in the present case, are single, individual, without parallel, or specific resemblance, may be difficult to explain. And will any man tell me with a serious countenance, that an orderly universe must arise from some thought and art, like the human; because we have experience of it? To ascertain this reasoning, it were requisite, that we had experience of the origin of worlds; and it is not sufficient surely, that we have seen ships and cities arise from human art and contrivance

PHILO was proceeding in this vehement manner, somewhat between jest and earnest, as it appeared to me; when he observed some signs of impatience in CLEANTHES, and then immediately stopped short. What I had to suggest, said CLEANTHES, is only that you would not abuse terms, or make use of popular expressions to subvert philosophical reasonings. You know, that the vulgar often

distinguish reason from experience, even where the question relates only to matter of fact and existence; though it is found, where that *reason* is properly analysed, that it is nothing but a species of experience. To prove by experience the origin of the universe from mind is not more contrary to common speech than to prove the motion of the earth from the same principle. And a caviller might raise all the same objections to the COPERNICAN system, which you have urged against my reasonings. Have you other earths, might he say, which you have seen to move? Have

Yes! cried PHILO, interrupting him, we have other earths. Is not the moon another earth, which we see to turn round its centre? Is not Venus another earth, where we observe the same phenomenon? Are not the revolutions of the sun also a confirmation, from analogy, of the same theory? All the planets, are they not earths, which revolve about the sun? Are not the satellites moons, which move round Jupiter and Saturn, and along with these primary planets, round the sun? These analogies and resemblances, with others, which I have not mentioned, are the sole

proofs of the COPERNICAN system: and to you it belongs to consider, whether you have any analogies of the same kind to support your theory.

In reality, CLEANTHES, continued he, the modern system of astronomy is now so much received by all inquirers, and has become so essential a part even of our earliest education, that we are not commonly very scrupulous in examining the reasons upon which it is founded. It is now become a matter of mere curiosity to study the first writers on that subject, who had the full force of prejudice to encounter, and were obliged to turn their arguments on every side, in order to render them popular and convincing. But if we peruse GALILÆO's famous Dialogues concerning the system of the world, we shall find, that that great genius, one of the sublimest that ever existed, first bent all his endeavours to prove, that there was no foundation for the distinction commonly made between elementary and celestial substances. The schools, proceeding from the illusions of sense, had carried this distinction very far; and had established the latter substances to

be ingenerable, incorruptible, unalterable, impassible; and had assigned all the opposite qualities to the former. But GALILÆO, beginning with the moon, proved its similarity in every particular to the earth; its convex figure, its natural darkness when not illuminated, its density, its distinction into solid and liquid, the variations of its phases, the mutual illuminations of the earth and moon, their mutual eclipses, the inequalities of the lunar surface, &c. After many instances of this kind, with regard to all the planets, men plainly saw, that these bodies became proper objects of experience; and that the similarity of their nature enabled us to extend the same arguments and phenomena from one to the other.

In this cautious proceeding of the astronomers, you may read your own condemnation, CLEANTHES; or rather may see, that the subject in which you are engaged exceeds all human reason and inquiry. Can you pretend to show any such similarity between the fabric of a house, and the generation of a universe? Have you ever seen nature in any such situation as resembles the first arrangement of the elements? Have worlds ever been formed

under your eye? and have you had leisure to observe the whole progress of the phenomenon, from the first appearance of order to its final consummation? If you have, then cite your experience, and deliver your theory.

PART III.

How the most absurd argument, replied CLEANTHES, in the hands of a man of ingenuity and invention, may acquire an air of probability! Are you not aware, PHILO, that it became necessary for COPERNICUS and his first disciples to prove the similarity of the terrestrial and celestial matter; because several philosophers, blinded by old systems, and supported by some sensible appearances, had denied this similarity? But that it is by no means necessary, that Theists should prove the similarity of the works of Nature to those of Art; because this similarity is self-evident and undeniable? The same matter, a like form: what more is requisite to show an analogy between their causes, and to ascertain the origin of all things from a divine purpose and intention? Your objections, I must freely tell you, are no better than the abstruse cavils of those philosophers who denied motion; and

ought to be refuted in the same manner, by illustrations, examples, and instances, rather than by serious argument and philosophy.

Suppose, therefore, that an articulate voice were heard in the clouds, much louder and more melodious than any which human art could ever reach: Suppose, that this voice were extended in the same instant over all nations, and spoke to each nation in its own language and dialect: Suppose, that the words delivered not only contain a just sense and meaning, but convey some instruction altogether worthy of a benevolent being, superior to mankind: could you possibly hesitate a moment concerning the cause of this voice? and must you not instantly ascribe it to some design or purpose? Yet I cannot see but all the same objections (if they merit that appellation) which lie against the system of Theism, may also be produced against this inference.

Might you not say, that all conclusions concerning fact were founded on experience: that when we hear an articulate voice in the dark, and thence infer a man, it is only the resemblance of the effects, which leads us to conclude that there is a like resemblance in the cause: but that this extraordinary voice, by

its loudness, extent, and flexibility to all languages, bears so little analogy to any human voice, that we have no reason to suppose any analogy in their causes: and consequently, that a rational, wise, coherent speech proceeded, you knew not whence, from some accidental whistling of the winds, not from any divine reason or intelligence? You see clearly your own objections in these cavils; and I hope too, you see clearly, that they cannot possibly have more force in the one case than in the other.

But to bring the case still nearer the present one of the universe, I shall make two suppositions, which imply not any absurdity or impossibility. Suppose, that there is a natural, universal, invariable language, common to every individual of human race, and that books are natural productions, which perpetuate themselves in the same manner with animals and vegetables, by descent and propagation. Several expressions of our passions contain a universal language: all brute animals have a natural speech, which, however limited is very intelligible to their own species. And as there are infinitely fewer parts and less contrivance in the finest composition of elo-

quence, than in the coarsest organized body, the propagation of an *Iliad* or *Æneid* is an easier supposition than that of any plant or animal.

Suppose, therefore, that you enter into your library, thus peopled by natural volumes, containing the most refined reason and most exquisite beauty: could you possibly open one of them, and doubt, that its original cause bore the strongest analogy to mind and intelligence? When it reasons and discourses; when it expostulates, argues, and enforces its views and topics; when it applies sometimes to the pure intellect, sometimes to the affections; when it collects, disposes, and adorns every consideration suited to the subject: could you persist in asserting, that all this, at the bottom, had really no meaning, and that the first formation of this volume in the loins of its original parent proceeded not from thought and design? Your obstinacy, I know, reaches not that degree of firmness: even your sceptical play and wantonness would be abashed at so glaring an absurdity.

But if there be any difference, PHILO, between this supposed case and the real one of the universe, it is all to the advantage of the

latter. The anatomy of an animal affords many stronger instances of design than the perusal of LIVY or TACITUS: and any objection which you start in the former case, by carrying me back to so unusual and extraordinary a scene as the first formation of worlds, the same objection has place on the supposition of our vegetating library. Chuse, then, your party, PHILO, without ambiguity or evasion; assert either that a rational volume is no proof of a rational cause, or admit of a similar cause to all the works of nature.

Let me here observe too, continued CLE-ANTHES, that this religious argument, instead of being weakened by that scepticism, so much affected by you, rather acquires force from it, and becomes more firm and undisputed. To exclude all argument or reasoning of every kind is either affectation or madness. The declared profession of every reasonable sceptic is only to reject abstruse, remote and refined arguments; to adhere to common sense and the plain instincts of nature; and to assent, wherever any reasons strike him with so full a force, that he cannot, without the greatest violence, prevent it. Now the arguments for Natural Religion are plainly of this kind; and

nothing but the most perverse, obstinate metaphysics can reject them. Consider, anatomize the eye; Survey its structure and contrivance; and tell me, from your own feeling, if the idea of a contriver does not immediately flow in upon you with a force like that of sensation. The most obvious conclusion surely is in favour of design; and it requires time, reflection and study, to summon up those frivolous, though abstruse objections, which can support Infidelity. Who can behold the male and female of each species, the correspondence of their parts and instincts, their passions and whole course of life before and after generation, but must be sensible, that the propagation of the species is intended by Nature? Millions and millions of such instances present themselves through every part of the universe; and no language can convey a more intelligible, irresistible meaning, than the curious adjustment of final causes. To what degree, therefore, of blind dogmatism must one have attained, to reject such natural and such convincing arguments?

Some beauties in writing we may meet with, which seem contrary to rules, and which gain the affections, and animate the imagination, in

opposition to all the precepts of criticism, and to the authority of the established masters of art. And if the argument for Theism be, as you pretend, contradictory to the principles of logic; its universal, its irresistible influence proves clearly, that there may be arguments of a like irregular nature. Whatever cavils may be urged; an orderly world, as well as a coherent, articulate speech, will still be received as an incontestable proof of design and intention.

It sometimes happens, I own, that the religious arguments have not their due influence on an ignorant savage and barbarian; not because they are obscure and difficult, but because he never asks himself any question with regard to them. Whence arises the curious structure of an animal? From the copulation of its parents. And these whence? From *their* parents? A few removes set the objects at such a distance, that to him they are lost in darkness and confusion; nor is he actuated by any curiosity to trace them farther. But this is neither dogmatism nor scepticism, but stupidity; a state of mind very different from your sifting, inquisitive disposition, my ingenious friend. You can trace

causes from effects: You can compare the most distant and remote objects: and your greatest errors proceed not from barrenness of thought and invention, but from too luxuriant a fertility, which suppresses your natural good sense, by a profusion of unnecessary scruples and objections.

Here I could observe, HERMIPPUS, that PHILO was a little embarrassed and confounded: But while he hesitated in delivering an answer, luckily for him, DEMEA broke in upon the discourse, and saved his countenance.

Your instance, CLEANTHES, said he, drawn from books and language, being familiar, has, I confess, so much more force on that account; but is there not some danger too in this very circumstance; and may it not render us presumptuous, by making us imagine we comprehend the Deity, and have some adequate idea of his nature and attributes? When I read a volume, I enter into the mind and intention of the author: I become him, in a manner, for the instant; and have an immediate feeling and conception of those ideas which revolved in his imagination while employed in that composition. But so near an approach we never surely can make to the

Deity. His ways are not our ways. His attributes are perfect, but incomprehensible. And this volume of Nature contains a great and inexplicable riddle, more than any intelligible discourse or reasoning.

The ancient PLATONISTS, you know, were the most religious and devout of all the Pagan philosophers: yet many of them, particularly PLOTINUS, expressly declare, that intellect or understanding is not to be ascribed to the Deity, and that our most perfect worship of him consists, not in acts of veneration, reverence, gratitude or love; but in a certain mysterious self-annihilation or total extinction of all our faculties. These ideas are, perhaps, too far stretched; but still it must be acknowledged, that, by representing the Deity as so intelligible, and comprehensible, and so similar to a human mind, we are guilty of the grossest and most narrow partiality, and make ourselves the model of the whole universe.

All the *sentiments* of the human mind, gratitude, resentment, love, friendship, approbation, blame, pity, emulation, envy, have a plain reference to the state and situation of man, and are calculated for preserving the existence, and promoting the activity of such a

being in such circumstances. It seems therefore unreasonable to transfer such sentiments to a supreme existence, or to suppose him actuated by them; and the phenomena, besides, of the universe will not support us in such a theory. All our *ideas*, derived from the senses, are confusedly false and illusive; and cannot, therefore, be supposed to have place in a supreme intelligence: And as the ideas of internal sentiment, added to those of the external senses, compose the whole furniture of human understanding, we may conclude, that none of the *materials* of thought are in any respect similar in the human and in the divine intelligence. Now, as to the *manner* of thinking; how can we make any comparison between them, or suppose them anywise resembling? Our thought is fluctuating, uncertain, fleeting, successive, and compounded; and were we to remove these circumstances, we absolutely annihilate its essence, and it would, in such a case, be an abuse of terms to apply to it the name of thought or reason. At least, if it appear more pious and respectful (as it really is) still to retain these terms, when we mention the Supreme Being, we ought to

acknowledge, that their meaning, in that case, is totally incomprehensible; and that the infirmities of our nature do not permit us to reach any ideas, which in the least correspond to the ineffable sublimity of the divine attributes.

PART IV.

It seems strange to me, said CLEANTHES, that you, DEMEA, who are so sincere in the cause of religion, should still maintain the mysterious, incomprehensible nature of the Deity, and should insist so strenuously, that he has no manner of likeness or resemblance to human creatures. The Deity, I can readily allow, possesses many powers and attributes, of which we can have no comprehension: But if our ideas, so far as they go, be not just and adequate, and correspondent to his real nature, I know not what there is in this subject worth insisting on. Is the name, without any meaning, of such mighty importance? Or how do you MYSTICS, who maintain the absolute incomprehensibility of the Deity, differ from Sceptics or Atheists, who assert, that the first cause of all is unknown and unintelligible? Their temerity must be very great, if, after rejecting the production by a mind; I mean, a

mind resembling the human (for I know of no other), they pretend to assign, with certainty, any other specific, intelligible cause: And their conscience must be very scrupulous indeed, if they refuse to call the universal, unknown cause a God or Deity; and to bestow on him as many sublime eulogies and unmeaning epithets, as you shall please to require of them.

Who could imagine, replied DEMEA, that CLEANTHES, the calm, philosophical CLEANTHES, would attempt to refute his antagonists, by affixing a nick-name to them; and like the common bigots and inquisitors of the age, have recourse to invective and declamation, instead of reasoning? Or does he not perceive, that these topics are easily retorted, and that ANTHROPOMORPHITE is an appellation as invidious, and implies as dangerous consequences, as the epithet of MYSTIC, with which he has honoured us? In reality, CLEANTHES, consider what it is you assert, when you represent the Deity as similar to a human mind and understanding. What is the soul of man? A composition of various faculties, passions, sentiments, ideas; united, indeed, into one self or person, but still distinct from each other. When it reasons, the ideas, which are the

parts of its discourse, arrange themselves in a certain form or order; which is not preserved entire for a moment, but immediately gives place to another arrangement. New opinions, new passions, new affections, new feelings arise, which continually diversify the mental scene, and produce in it the greatest variety, and most rapid succession imaginable. How is this compatible with that perfect immutability and simplicity which all true Theists ascribe to the Deity? By the same act, say they, he sees past, present, and future: His love and his hatred, his mercy and his justice, are one individual operation: He is entire in every point of space; and complete in every instant of duration. No succession, no change, no acquisition, no diminution. What he is implies not in it any shadow of distinction or diversity. And what he is, this moment, he ever has been, and ever will be, without any new judgment, sentiment, or operation. He stands fixed in one simple, perfect state; nor can you ever say, with any propriety, that this act of his is different from that other, or that this judgment or idea has been lately formed, and will give place, by succession, to any different judgment or idea.

I can readily allow, said CLEANTHES, that those who maintain the perfect simplicity of the Supreme Being, to the extent in which you have explained it, are complete MYSTICS, and chargeable with all the consequences which I have drawn from their opinion. They are, in a word, ATHEISTS, without knowing it. For though it be allowed, that the Deity possesses attributes, of which we have no comprehension; yet ought we never to ascribe to him any attributes, which are absolutely incompatible with that intelligent nature, essential to him. A mind, whose acts and sentiments and ideas are not distinct and successive; one, that is wholly simple, and totally immutable; is a mind which has no thought, no reason, no will, no sentiment, no love, no hatred; or in a word, is no mind at all. It is an abuse of terms to give it that appellation; and we may as well speak of limited extension without figure, or of number without composition.

Pray consider, said PHILO, whom you are at present inveighing against. You are honouring with the appellation of *Atheist* all the sound, orthodox divines almost, who have treated of this subject; and you will, at last, be, yourself, found, according to your reckon-

ing, the only sound Theist in the world. But if idolaters be Atheists, as, I think, may justly be asserted, and Christian Theologians the same; what becomes of the argument, so much celebrated, derived from the universal consent of mankind?

But because I know you are not much swayed by names and authorities, I shall endeavour to show you, a little more distinctly, the inconveniences of that Anthropomorphism which you have embraced; and I shall prove, that there is no ground to suppose a plan of the world to be formed in the divine mind, consisting of distinct ideas, differently arranged; in the same manner as an architect forms in his head the plan of a house which he intends to execute.

It is not easy, I own, to see, what is gained by this supposition, whether we judge of the matter by *Reason* or by *Experience*. We are still obliged to mount higher, in order to find the cause of this cause, which you had assigned as satisfactory and conclusive.

If *Reason* (I mean abstract reason, derived from inquiries *a priori*) be not alike mute with regard to all questions concerning cause and effect; this sentence at least it will venture

to pronounce, That a mental world, or universe of ideas, requires a cause as much, as does a material world, or universe of objects; and if similar in its arrangement must require a similar cause. For what is there in this subject, which should occasion a different conclusion or inference? In an abstract view, they are entirely alike; and no difficulty attends the one supposition, which is not common to both of them.

Again, when we will needs force *Experience* to pronounce some sentence, even on these subjects, which lie beyond her sphere; neither can she perceive any material difference in this particular, between these two kinds of worlds, but finds them to be governed by similar principles, and to depend upon an equal variety of causes in their operations. We have specimens in miniature of both of them. Our own mind resembles the one: A vegetable or animal body the other. Let Experience, therefore, judge from these samples. Nothing seems more delicate with regard to its causes than thought; and as these causes never operate in two persons after the same manner, so we never find two persons, who think exactly alike. Nor indeed does the same person think exactly

alike at any two different periods of time. A difference of age, of the disposition of his body, of weather, of food, of company, of books, of passions; any of these particulars, or others more minute, are sufficient to alter the curious machinery of thought, and communicate to it very different movements and operations. As far as we can judge, vegetables and animal bodies are not more delicate in their motions, nor depend upon a greater variety or more curious adjustment of springs and principles.

How therefore shall we satisfy ourselves concerning the cause of that Being, whom you suppose the Author of Nature, or, according to your system of Anthropomorphism, the ideal world, into which you trace the material? Have we not the same reason to trace that ideal world into another ideal world, or new intelligent principle? But if we stop, and go no farther; why go so far? Why not stop at the material world? How can we satisfy ourselves without going on *in infinitum*? And after all, what satisfaction is there in that infinite progression? Let us remember the story of the INDIAN philosopher and his elephant. It was never more applicable than to

the present subject. If the material world rests upon a similar ideal world, this ideal world must rest upon some other; and so on, without end. It were better, therefore, never to look beyond the present material world. By supposing it to contain the principle of its order within itself, we really assert it to be God; and the sooner we arrive at that divine Being, so much the better. When you go one step beyond the mundane system, you only excite an inquisitive humour, which it is impossible ever to satisfy.

To say, that the different ideas, which compose the reason of the Supreme Being, fall into order, of themselves, and by their own nature, is really to talk without any precise meaning. If it has a meaning, I would fain know, why it is not as good sense to say, that the parts of the material world fall into order, of themselves, and by their own nature. Can the one opinion be intelligible, while the other is not so?

We have, indeed, experience of ideas, which fall into order, of themselves, and without any *known* cause: But, I am sure, we have a much larger experience of matter, which does the same; as, in all instances of generation and

vegetation, where the accurate analysis of the cause exceeds all human comprehension. We have also experience of particular systems of thought and of matter, which have no order; of the first, in madness; of the second, in corruption. Why then should we think, that order is more essential to one than the other? And if it requires a cause in both, what do we gain by your system, in tracing the universe of objects into a similar universe of ideas? The first step, which we make, leads us on for ever. It were, therefore, wise in us, to limit all our enquiries to the present world, without looking farther. No satisfaction can ever be attained by these speculations, which so far exceed the narrow bounds of human understanding.

It was usual with the PERIPATETICS, you know, CLEANTHES, when the cause of any phenomenon was demanded, to have recourse to their *faculties* or *occult qualities*, and to say, for instance, that bread nourished by its nutritive faculty, and senna purged by its purgative: But it has been discovered, that this subterfuge was nothing but the disguise of ignorance; and that these philosophers, though less ingenuous, really said the same

thing with the sceptics or the vulgar, who fairly confessed, that they knew not the cause of these phenomena. In like manner, when it is asked, what cause produces order in the ideas of the Supreme Being, can any other reason be assigned by you, Anthropomorphites, than that it is a *rational* faculty, and that such is the nature of the Deity? But why a similar answer will not be equally satisfactory in accounting for the order of the world, without having recourse to any such intelligent creator, as you insist on, may be difficult to determine. It is only to say, that *such* is the nature of material objects, and that they are all originally possessed of a *faculty* of order and proportion. These are only more learned and elaborate ways of confessing our ignorance; nor has the one hypothesis any real advantage above the other, except in its greater conformity to vulgar prejudices.

You have displayed this argument with great emphasis, replied CLEANTHES: You seem not sensible, how easy it is to answer it. Even in common life, if I assign a cause for any event; is it any objection, PHILO, that I cannot assign the cause of that cause, and answer every new question, which may incessantly be started?

And what philosophers could possibly submit to so rigid a rule? philosophers, who confess ultimate causes to be totally unknown, and are sensible, that the most refined principles, into which they trace the phenomena, are still to them as inexplicable as these phenomena themselves are to the vulgar. The order and arrangement of nature, the curious adjustment of final causes, the plain use and intention of every part and organ; all these bespeak in the clearest language an intelligent cause or author. The heavens and the earth join in the same testimony: The whole chorus of Nature raises one hymn to the praises of its creator: You alone, or almost alone, disturb this general harmony. You start abstruse doubts, cavils, and objections: You ask me, what is the cause of this cause? I know not; I care not; that concerns not me. I have found a Deity; and here I stop my enquiry. Let those go farther, who are wiser or more enterprising.

I pretend to be neither, replied PHILO: and for that very reason, I should never perhaps have attempted to go so far; especially when I am sensible, that I must at last be contented to sit down with the same answer,

which, without farther trouble, might have satisfied me from the beginning. If I am still to remain in utter ignorance of causes, and can absolutely give an explication of nothing, I shall never esteem it any advantage to shove off for a moment a difficulty, which, you acknowledge, must immediately, in its full force, recur upon me. Naturalists indeed very justly explain particular effects by more general causes, though these general causes themselves should remain in the end totally inexplicable: but they never surely thought it satisfactory to explain a particular effect by a particular cause, which was no more to be accounted for than the effect itself. An ideal system, arranged of itself, without a precedent design, is not a whit more explicable than a material one, which attains its order in a like manner; nor is there any more difficulty in the latter supposition than in the former.

PART V.

BUT to show you still more inconveniences, continued PHILO, in your Anthropomorphism; please to take a new survey of your principles. *Like effects prove like causes.* This is the experimental argument; and this, you say too, is the sole theological argument. Now it is certain, that the liker the effects are, which are seen, and the liker the causes, which are inferred, the stronger is the argument. Every departure on either side diminishes the probability, and renders the experiment less conclusive. You cannot doubt of the principle: neither ought you to reject its consequences.

All the new discoveries in astronomy, which prove the immense grandeur and magnificence of the works of Nature, are so many additional arguments for a Deity, according to the true system of Theism: but according to your hypothesis of experimental Theism, they become so many objections, by removing the effect still

farther from all resemblance to the effects of human art and contrivance. For if Lucretius,¹ even following the old system of the world, could exclaim,

Quis regere immensi summam, quis habere profundi
Indu manu validas potis est moderanter habenas?
Quis pariter cœlos omnes convertere? et omnes
Ignibus ætheriis terras suffire feraces?
Omnibus inque locis esse omni tempore præsto?

If Tully² esteemed this reasoning so natural, as to put it into the mouth of his EPICUREAN. *Quibus enim oculis animi intueri potuit vester Plato fabricam illam tanti operis, qua construi a Deo atque ædificari mundum facit? quæ molitio? quæ ferramenta? qui vectes? quæ machinæ? qui ministri tanti muneris fuerunt? quemadmodum autem obedire et parere voluntati architecti aer, ignis, aqua, terra potuerunt?* If this argument, I say, had any force in former ages: how much greater must it have at present; when the bounds of Nature are so infinitely enlarged, and such a magnificent scene is opened to us? It is still more unreasonable to form our idea of so unlimited a cause from our experience of the narrow productions of human design and invention.

¹ Lib. xi. 1094.

² De Nat. Deor., lib. i.

The discoveries by microscopes, as they open a new universe in miniature, are still objections, according to you; arguments, according to me. The farther we push our researches of this kind, we are still led to infer the universal cause of all to be vastly different from mankind, or from any object of human experience and observation.

And what say you to the discoveries in anatomy, chemistry, botany? These surely are no objections, replied CLEANTHES: they only discover new instances of art and contrivance. It is still the image of mind reflected on us from innumerable objects. Add, a mind *like the human*, said PHILO. I know of no other, replied CLEANTHES. And the liker the better, insisted PHILO. To be sure, said CLEANTHES.

Now, CLEANTHES, said PHILO, with an air of alacrity and triumph, mark the consequences. *First*, By this method of reasoning, you renounce all claim to infinity in any of the attributes of the Deity. For as the cause ought only to be proportioned to the effect, and the effect, so far as it falls under our cognisance, is not infinite; what pretensions have we, upon your suppositions, to ascribe that

attribute to the divine Being? You will still insist, that, by removing him so much from all similarity to human creatures, we give in to the most arbitrary hypothesis, and at the same time weaken all proofs of his existence.

Secondly, You have no reason, on your theory, for ascribing perfection to the Deity, even in his finite capacity; or for supposing him free from every error, mistake, or incoherence in his undertakings. There are many inexplicable difficulties in the works of Nature, which, if we allow a perfect author to be proved *a priori*, are easily solved, and become only seeming difficulties, from the narrow capacity of man, who cannot trace infinite relations. But according to your method of reasoning, these difficulties become all real; and perhaps will be insisted on, as new instances of likeness to human art and contrivance. At least, you must acknowledge, that it is impossible for us to tell, from our limited views, whether this system contains any great faults, or deserves any considerable praise, if compared to other possible, and even real systems. Could a peasant, if the *ÆNEID* were read to him, pronounce that poem to be absolutely faultless, or even assign to it its

proper rank among the productions of human wit; he, who had never seen any other production?

But were this world ever so perfect a production, it must still remain uncertain, whether all the excellences of the work can justly be ascribed to the workman. If we survey a ship, what an exalted idea must we form of the ingenuity of the carpenter, who framed so complicated, useful, and beautiful a machine? And what surprise must we feel, when we find him a stupid mechanic, who imitated others, and copied an art, which, through a long succession of ages, after multiplied trials, mistakes, corrections, deliberations, and controversies, had been gradually improving? Many worlds might have been botched and bungled, throughout an eternity, ere this system was struck out: much labour lost: many fruitless trials made: and a slow, but continued improvement carried on during infinite ages in the art of world-making. In such subjects, who can determine, where the truth; nay, who can conjecture where the probability lies; amidst a great number of hypotheses which may be proposed, and a still greater number which may be imagined?

And what shadow of an argument, continued

PHILO, can you produce, from your hypothesis, to prove the unity of the DEITY? A great number of men join in building a house or ship, in rearing a city, in framing a commonwealth: why may not several deities combine in contriving and framing a world? This is only so much greater similarity to human affairs? By sharing the work among several, we may so much further limit the attributes of each, and get rid of that extensive power and knowledge, which must be supposed in one deity, and which, according to you, can only serve to weaken the proof of his existence. And if such foolish, such vicious creatures as man can yet often unite in framing and executing one plan; how much more those deities or dæmons, whom we may suppose several degrees more perfect?

To multiply causes, without necessity, is indeed contrary to true philosophy: but this principle applies not to the present case. Were one deity antecedently proved by your theory, who were possessed of every attribute, requisite to the production of the universe; it would be needless, I own (though not absurd) to suppose any other deity existent. But while it is still a question, Whether all these attributes are united in one subject, or dispersed among

several independent beings: by what phenomena in nature can we pretend to decide the controversy? Where we see a body raised in a scale, we are sure that there is in the opposite scale, however concealed from sight, some counterpoising weight equal to it: but it is still allowed to doubt, whether that weight be an aggregate of several distinct bodies, or one uniform united mass. And if the weight requisite very much exceeds any thing which we have ever seen conjoined in any single body, the former supposition becomes still more probable and natural. An intelligent being of such vast power and capacity, as is necessary to produce the universe, or, to speak in the language of ancient philosophy, so prodigious an animal, exceeds all analogy, and even comprehension.

But farther, CLEANTHES; men are mortal, and renew their species by generation; and this is common to all living creatures. The two great sexes of male and female, says MILTON, animate the world. Why must this circumstance, so universal, so essential, be excluded from those numerous and limited deities? Behold then the theogony of ancient times brought back upon us.

And why not become a perfect Anthropomorphite? Why not assert the deity or deities to be corporeal, and to have eyes, a nose, mouth, ears, &c.? EPICURUS maintained, that no man had ever seen reason but in a human figure; therefore the gods must have a human figure. And this argument, which is deservedly so much ridiculed by Cicero, becomes, according to you, solid and philosophical.

In a word, CLEANTHES, a man, who follows your hypothesis, is able, perhaps, to assert, or conjecture, that the universe, sometime, arose from something like design: but beyond that position he cannot ascertain one single circumstance, and is left afterwards to fix every point of his theology, by the utmost licence of fancy and hypothesis. This world, for aught he knows, is very faulty and imperfect, compared to a superior standard; and was only the first rude essay of some infant deity, who afterwards abandoned it, ashamed of his lame performance; it is the work only of some dependent, inferior deity; and is the object of derision to his superiors: it is the production of old age and dotage in some superannuated deity; and ever since his death, has run on at adventures, from the first im-

pulse and active force, which it received from him. You justly give signs of horror, DEMEA, at these strange suppositions: but these, and a thousand more of the same kind, are CLEANTHES'S suppositions, not mine. From the moment the attributes of the Deity are supposed finite, all these have place. And I cannot, for my part, think, that so wild and unsettled a system of theology is, in any respect, preferable to none at all.

These suppositions I absolutely disown, cried CLEANTHES: they strike me, however, with no horror; especially, when proposed in that rambling way in which they drop from you. On the contrary, they give me pleasure, when I see, that, by the utmost indulgence of your imagination, you never get rid of the hypothesis of design in the universe; but are obliged, at every turn, to have recourse to it. To this concession I adhere steadily; and this I regard as a sufficient foundation for religion.

PART VI.

IT must be a slight fabric, indeed, said DEMEA, which can be erected on so tottering a foundation. While we are uncertain, whether there is one deity or many; whether the deity or deities, to whom we owe our existence, be perfect or imperfect, subordinate or supreme, dead or alive; what trust or confidence can we repose in them? What devotion or worship address to them? What veneration or obedience pay them? To all the purposes of life, the theory of religion becomes altogether useless: and even with regard to speculative consequences, its uncertainty, according to you, must render it totally precarious and unsatisfactory.

To render it still more unsatisfactory, said PHILO, there occurs to me another hypothesis, which must acquire an air of probability from the method of reasoning so much insisted on by CLEANTHES. That like effects arise from

like causes: this principle he supposes the foundation of all religion. But there is another principle of the same kind, no less certain, and derived from the same source of experience: That where several known circumstances are *observed* to be similar, the unknown will also be *found* similar. Thus, if we see the limbs of a human body, we conclude, that it is also attended with a human head, though hid from us. Thus, if we see, through a chink in a wall, a small part of the sun, we conclude that, were the wall removed, we should see the whole body. In short, this method of reasoning is so obvious and familiar, that no scruple can ever be made with regard to its solidity.

Now if we survey the universe, so far as it falls under our knowledge, it bears a great resemblance to an animal or organized body, and seems actuated with a like principle of life and motion. A continual circulation of matter in it produces no disorder: a continual waste in every part is incessantly repaired; the closest sympathy is perceived throughout the entire system: and each part or member, in performing its proper offices, operates both to its own preservation and to that of the whole. The world, therefore, I infer, is an animal,

and the Deity is the SOUL of the world, actuating it, and actuated by it.

You have too much learning, CLEANTHES, to be at all surprised at this opinion, which, you know, was maintained by almost all the Theists of antiquity, and chiefly prevails in their discourses and reasonings. For though sometimes the ancient philosophers reason from final causes, as if they thought the world the workmanship of God; yet it appears rather their favourite notion to consider it as his body, whose organization renders it subservient to him. And it must be confessed, that as the universe resembles more a human body than it does the works of human art and contrivance; if our limited analogy could ever, with any propriety, be extended to the whole of nature, the inference seems juster in favour of the ancient than the modern theory.

There are many other advantages too, in the former theory, which recommend it to the ancient Theologians. Nothing more repugnant to all their notions, because nothing more repugnant to common experience than mind without body; a mere spiritual substance, which fell not under their senses nor comprehension, and of which they had not observed

one single instance throughout all nature. Mind and body they knew, because they felt both: an order, arrangement, organization, or internal machinery in both they likewise knew, after the same manner; and it could not but seem reasonable to transfer this experience to the universe, and to suppose the divine mind and body to be also coeval, and to have, both of them, order and arrangement naturally inherent in them, and inseparable from them.

Here therefore is a new species of Anthropomorphism, CLEANTHES, on which you may deliberate; and a theory which seems not liable to any considerable difficulties. You are too much superior surely to *systematical prejudices*, to find any more difficulty in supposing an animal body to be, originally, of itself, or from unknown causes, possessed of order and organization, than in supposing a similar order to belong to mind. But the *vulgar prejudice*, that body and mind ought always to accompany each other, ought not, one should think, to be entirely neglected; since it is founded on *vulgar experience*, the only guide which you profess to follow in all these theological inquiries. And if you assert, that our limited experience is an unequal standard, by which to judge of the un-

limited extent of nature; you entirely abandon your own hypothesis, and must thenceforward adopt our Mysticism, as you call it, and admit of the absolute incomprehensibility of the Divine Nature.

This theory, I own, replied CLEANTHES, has never before occurred to me, though a pretty natural one; and I cannot readily, upon so short an examination and reflection, deliver any opinion with regard to it. You are very scrupulous, indeed, said PHILO; were I to examine any system of yours, I should not have acted with half that caution and reserve, in starting objections and difficulties to it. However, if any thing occur to you, you will oblige us by proposing it.

Why then, replied CLEANTHES, it seems to me that, though the world does, in many circumstances, resemble an animal body; yet is the analogy also defective in many circumstances, the most material: no organs of sense; no seat of thought or reason; no one precise origin of motion and action. In short, it seems to bear a stronger resemblance to a vegetable than to an animal, and your inference would be so far inconclusive in favour of the soul of the world.

But, in the next place, your theory seems to imply the eternity of the world; and that is a principle which, I think, can be refuted by the strongest reasons and probabilities. I shall suggest an argument to this purpose, which, I believe, has not been insisted on by any writer. Those, who reason from the late origin of arts and sciences, though their inference wants not force, may perhaps be refuted by considerations, derived from the nature of human society, which is in continual revolution between ignorance and knowledge, liberty and slavery, riches and poverty; so that it is impossible for us, from our limited experience, to foretell with assurance what events may or may not be expected. Ancient learning and history seem to have been in great danger of entirely perishing after the inundation of the barbarous nations; and had these convulsions continued a little longer, or been a little more violent, we should not probably have now known what passed in the world a few centuries before us. Nay, were it not for the superstition of the Popes, who preserved a little jargon of LATIN, in order to support the appearance of an ancient and universal church, that tongue must have been utterly lost: in which case,

the Western world, being totally barbarous, would not have been in a fit disposition for receiving the GREEK language and learning, which was conveyed to them after the sacking of CONSTANTINOPLE. When learning and books had been extinguished, even the mechanical arts would have fallen considerably to decay; and it is easily imagined, that fable or tradition might ascribe to them a much later origin than the true one. This vulgar argument, therefore, against the eternity of the world, seems a little precarious.

But here appears to be the foundation of a better argument. LUCULLUS was the first that brought cherry-trees from ASIA to EUROPE; though that tree thrives so well in many EUROPEAN climates, that it grows in the woods without any culture. Is it possible, that, throughout a whole eternity, no EUROPEAN had ever passed into ASIA, and thought of transplanting so delicious a fruit into his own country? Or if the tree was once transplanted and propagated, how could it ever afterwards perish? Empires may rise and fall; liberty and slavery succeed alternately; ignorance and knowledge give place to each other; but the cherry-tree will still remain in the woods of GREECE, SPAIN

and ITALY, and will never be affected by the revolutions of human society.

It is not two thousand years since vines were transplanted into FRANCE; though there is no climate in the world more favourable to them. It is not three centuries since horses, cows, sheep, swine, dogs, corn, were known in AMERICA. Is it possible, that, during the revolutions of a whole eternity, there never arose a COLUMBUS, who might open the communication between EUROPE and that continent? We may as well imagine, that all men would wear stockings for ten thousand years, and never have the sense to think of garters to tie them. All these seem convincing proofs of the youth, or rather infancy, of the world; as being founded on the operation of principles more constant and steady, than those by which human society is governed and directed. Nothing less than a total convulsion of the elements will ever destroy all the EUROPEAN animals and vegetables, which are now to be found in the Western world.

And what argument have you against such convulsions? replied PHILO. Strong and almost incontestable proofs may be traced over the whole earth, that every part of

this globe has continued for many ages entirely covered with water. And though order were supposed inseparable from matter, and inherent in it; yet may matter be susceptible of many and great revolutions, through the endless periods of eternal duration. The incessant changes, to which every part of it is subject, seem to intimate some such general transformations; though at the same time, it is observable, that all the changes and corruptions, of which we have ever had experience, are but passages from one state of order to another; nor can matter ever rest in total deformity and confusion. What we see in the parts, we may infer in the whole; at least, that is the method of reasoning on which you rest your whole theory. And were I obliged to defend any particular system of this nature (which I never willingly should do), I esteem none more plausible than that which ascribes an eternal, inherent principle of order to the world; though attended with great and continual revolutions and alterations. This at once solves all difficulties; and if the solution, by being so general, is not entirely complete and satisfactory, it is, at least, a theory, that we must, sooner or later,

have recourse to, whatever system we embrace. How could things have been as they are, were there not an original, inherent principle of order somewhere, in thought or in matter? And it is very indifferent to which of these we give the preference. Chance has no place, on any hypothesis, sceptical or religious. Every thing is surely governed by steady, inviolable laws. And were the inmost essence of things laid open to us, we should then discover a scene, of which, at present, we can have no idea. Instead of admiring the order of natural beings, we should clearly see that it was absolutely impossible for them, in the smallest article, ever to admit of any other disposition.

Were any one inclined to revive the ancient Pagan Theology, which maintained, as we learn from Hesiod, that this globe was governed by 30,000 deities, who arose from the unknown powers of nature: you would naturally object, CLEANTHES, that nothing is gained by this hypothesis; and that it is as easy to suppose all men animals, beings more numerous, but less perfect, to have sprung immediately from a like origin. Push the same inference a step farther; and you

will find a numerous society of deities as explicable as one universal deity, who possesses, within himself, the powers and perfections of the whole society. All these systems, then, of Scepticism, Polytheism, and Theism, you must allow, on your principles, to be on a like footing, and that no one of them has any advantages over the others. You may thence learn the fallacy of your principles.

PART VII.

BUT here, continued PHILO, in examining the ancient system of the soul of the world, there strikes me, all on a sudden, a new idea, which, if just, must go near to subvert all your reasoning, and destroy even your first inferences, on which you repose such confidence. If the universe bears a greater likeness to animal bodies and to vegetables, than to the works of human art, it is more probable that its cause resembles the cause of the former than that of the latter, and its origin ought rather to be ascribed to generation or vegetation than to reason or design. Your conclusion, even according to your own principles, is therefore lame and defective.

Pray open up this argument a little farther, said DEMEA. For I do not rightly apprehend it, in that concise manner, in which you have expressed it.

Our friend, CLEANTHES, replied PHILO, as you

have heard, asserts, that since no question of fact can be proved otherwise than by experience, the existence of a Deity admits not of proof from any other medium. The world, says he, resembles the works of human contrivance: Therefore its cause must also resemble that of the other. Here we may remark, that the operation of one very small part of nature, to wit man, upon another very small part, to wit that inanimate matter lying within his reach, is the rule, by which CLEANTHES judges of the origin of the whole; and he measures objects, so widely disproportioned, by the same individual standard. But to waive all objections drawn from this topic; I affirm, that there are other parts of the universe (besides the machines of human invention) which bear still a greater resemblance to the fabric of the world, and which therefore afford a better conjecture concerning the universal origin of this system. These parts are animals and vegetables. The world plainly resembles more an animal or a vegetable, than it does a watch or a knitting-loom. Its cause, therefore, it is more probable, resembles the cause of the former. The cause of the former is generation or vegetation. The cause, there-

fore, of the world, we may infer to be something similar or analogous to generation or vegetation.

But how is it conceivable, said DEMEA, that the world can arise from any thing similar to vegetation or generation?

Very easily, replied PHILO. In like manner as a tree sheds its seed into the neighbouring fields, and produces other trees; so the great vegetable, the world, or this planetary system, produces within itself certain seeds, which, being scattered into the surrounding chaos, vegetate into new worlds. A comet, for instance, is the seed of a world; and after it has been fully ripened, by passing from sun to sun, and star to star, it is at last tossed into the unformed elements, which everywhere surround this universe, and immediately sprouts up into a new system.

Or if, for the sake of variety (for I see no other advantage), we should suppose this world to be an animal; a comet is the egg of this animal; and in like manner as an ostrich lays its egg in the sand, which, without any farther care, hatches the egg, and produces a new animal; so . . . I understand you, says DEMEA: But what wild, arbitrary suppositions

are these? What *data* have you for such extraordinary conclusions? And is the slight, imaginary resemblance of the world to a vegetable or an animal sufficient to establish the same inference with regard to both? Objects, which are in general so widely different; ought they to be a standard for each other?

Right, cries PHILO: This is the topic on which I have all along insisted. I have still asserted, that we have no *data* to establish any system of cosmogony. Our experience, so imperfect in itself, and so limited both in extent and duration, can afford us no probable conjecture concerning the whole of things. But if we must needs fix on some hypothesis; by what rule, pray, ought we to determine our choice? Is there any other rule than the greater similarity of the objects compared? And does not a plant or an animal, which springs from vegetation or generation, bear a stronger resemblance to the world, than does any artificial machine, which arises from reason and design?

But what is this vegetation and generation of which you talk? said DEMEA. Can you explain their operations, and anatomize

that fine internal structure, on which they depend?

As much, at least, replied PHILO, as CLE-
ANTHES can explain the operations of reason,
or anatomize that internal structure, on which
it depends. But without any such elaborate
disquisitions, when I see an animal, I infer,
that it sprang from generation; and that with
as great certainty as you conclude a house to
have been reared by design. These words,
generation, reason, mark only certain powers
and energies in nature, whose effects are
known, but whose essence is incomprehens-
ible; and one of these principles, more than
the other, has no privilege for being made
a standard to the whole of nature.

In reality, DEMEA, it may reasonably be
expected, that the larger the views are which
we take of things, the better will they con-
duct us in our conclusions concerning such
extraordinary and such magnificent subjects.
In this little corner of the world alone, there
are four principles, *Reason, Instinct, Generation,*
Vegetation, which are similar to each other,
and are the causes of similar effects. What
a number of other principles may we naturally
suppose in the immense extent and variety of

the universe, could we travel from planet to planet and from system to system, in order to examine each part of this mighty fabric? Any one of these four principles above mentioned (and a hundred others which lie open to our conjecture) may afford us a theory, by which to judge of the origin of the world; and it is a palpable and egregious partiality, to confine our view entirely to that principle, by which our own minds operate. Were this principle more intelligent on that account, such a partiality might be somewhat excusable: But reason, in its internal fabric and structure, is really as little known to us as instinct or vegetation; and perhaps even that vague, undeterminate word, *Nature*, to which the vulgar refer every thing, is not at the bottom more inexplicable. The effects of these principles are all known to us from experience: But the principles themselves, and their manner of operation, are totally unknown: Nor is it less intelligible, or less conformable to experience to say, that the world arose by vegetation from a seed shed by another world, than to say that it arose from a divine reason or contrivance, according to the sense in which CLEANTHES understands it.

But methinks, said DEMEA, if the world had a vegetative quality, and could sow the seeds of new worlds into the infinite chaos, this power would be still an additional argument for design in its author. For whence could arise so wonderful a faculty but from design? Or how can order spring from any thing, which perceives not that order which it bestows?

You need only look around you, replied PHILO, to satisfy yourself with regard to this question. A tree bestows order and organisation on that tree, which springs from it, without knowing the order: an animal, in the same manner, on its offspring: a bird, on its nest: and instances of this kind are even more frequent in the world, than those of order, which arise from reason and contrivance. To say, that all this order in animals and vegetables proceeds ultimately from design, is begging the question; nor can that great point be ascertained otherwise than by proving *a priori*, both that order is, from its nature, inseparably attached to thought, and that it can never, of itself, or from original unknown principles, belong to matter.

But farther, DEMEA; this objection, which you urge, can never be made use of by CLE-

ANTHES, without renouncing a defence, which he has already made against one of my objections. When I enquired concerning the cause of that supreme reason and intelligence, into which he resolves every thing; he told me, that the impossibility of satisfying such enquiries could never be admitted as an objection in any species of philosophy. *We must stop somewhere*, says he; *nor is it ever within the reach of human capacity to explain ultimate causes, or show the last connections of any objects. It is sufficient, if the steps, so far as we go, are supported by experience and observation.* Now, that vegetation and generation, as well as reason, are experienced to be principles of order in nature, is undeniable. If I rest my system of cosmogony on the former, preferably to the latter, 'tis at my choice. The matter seems entirely arbitrary. And when CLEANTHES asks me what is the cause of my great vegetative or generative faculty, I am equally entitled to ask him the cause of his great reasoning principle. These questions we have agreed to forbear on both sides; and it is chiefly his interest on the present occasion to stick to this agreement. Judging by our limited and imperfect experience, generation

has some privileges above reason: For we see every day the latter arise from the former, never the former from the latter.

Compare, I beseech you, the consequences on both sides. The world, say I, resembles an animal, therefore it is an animal, therefore it arose from generation. The steps, I confess, are wide; yet there is some small appearance of analogy in each step. The world, says CLEANTHES, resembles a machine, therefore it is a machine, therefore it arose from design. The steps are here equally wide, and the analogy less striking. And if he pretends to carry on *my* hypothesis a step farther, and to infer design or reason from the great principle of generation, on which I insist; I may, with better authority, use the same freedom to push farther *his* hypothesis, and infer a divine generation or theogony from his principle of reason. I have at least some faint shadow of experience, which is the utmost that can ever be attained in the present subject. Reason, in innumerable instances, is observed to arise from the principle of generation, and never to arise from any other principle.

HESIOD, and all the ancient Mythologists, were so struck with this analogy, that they

universally explained the origin of nature from an animal birth, and copulation. PLATO too, so far as he is intelligible, seems to have adopted some such notion in his TIMÆUS.

The BRAHMINS assert, that the world arose from an infinite spider, who spun this whole complicated mass from his bowels, and annihilates afterwards the whole or any part of it, by absorbing it again, and resolving it into his own essence. Here is a species of cosmogony, which appears to us ridiculous; because a spider is a little contemptible animal, whose operations we are never likely to take for a model of the whole universe. But still here is a new species of analogy, even in our globe. And were there a planet wholly inhabited by spiders (which is very possible), this inference would there appear as natural and irrefragable as that which in our planet ascribes the origin of all things to design and intelligence, as explained by CLEANTHES. Why an orderly system may not be spun from the belly as well as from the brain, it will be difficult for him to give a satisfactory reason.

I must confess, PHILO, replied CLEANTHES, that of all men living, the task which you

have undertaken, of raising doubts and objections, suits you best, and seems, in a manner, natural and unavoidable to you. So great is your fertility of invention, that I am not ashamed to acknowledge myself unable, on a sudden, to solve regularly such out-of-the-way difficulties as you incessantly start upon me: though I clearly see, in general, their fallacy and error. And I question not, but you are yourself, at present, in the same case, and have not the solution so ready as the objection; while you must be sensible, that common sense and reason are entirely against you, and that such whimsies as you have delivered, may puzzle, but never can convince us.

PART VIII.

WHAT you ascribe to the fertility of my invention, replied PHILO, is entirely owing to the nature of the subject. In subjects, adapted to the narrow compass of human reason, there is commonly but one determination, which carries probability or conviction with it; and to a man of sound judgment, all other suppositions, but that one, appear entirely absurd and chimerical. But in such questions, as the present, a hundred contradictory views may preserve a kind of imperfect analogy; and invention has here full scope to exert itself. Without any great effort of thought, I believe that I could, in an instant, propose other systems of cosmogony, which would have some faint appearance of truth; though it is a thousand, a million to one, if either yours or any one of mine be the true system.

For instance; what if I should revive the old EPICUREAN hypothesis? This is commonly,

and I believe, justly, esteemed the most absurd system, that has yet been proposed; yet, I know not, whether, with a few alterations, it might not be brought to bear a faint appearance of probability. Instead of supposing matter infinite, as EPICURUS did; let us suppose it finite. A finite number of particles is only susceptible of finite transpositions: and it must happen, in an eternal duration, that every possible order or position must be tried an infinite number of times. This world, therefore, with all its events, even the most minute, has before been produced and destroyed, and will again be produced and destroyed, without any bounds and limitations. No one, who has a conception of the powers of infinite, in comparison of finite, will ever scruple this determination.

But this supposes, said DEMEA, that matter can acquire motion, without any voluntary agent or first mover.

And where is the difficulty, replied PHILO, of that supposition? Every event, before experience, is equally difficult and incomprehensible; and every event, after experience, is equally easy and intelligible. Motion, in many instances, from gravity, from elasticity, from

electricity, begins in matter, without any known voluntary agent; and to suppose always, in these cases, an unknown voluntary agent, is mere hypothesis; and hypothesis attended with no advantages. The beginning of motion in matter itself is as conceivable *a priori* as its communication from mind and intelligence.

Besides; why may not motion have been propagated by impulse through all eternity, and the same stock of it, or nearly the same, be still upheld in the universe? As much as is lost by the composition of motion, as much is gained by its resolution. And whatever the causes are, the fact is certain, that matter is, and always has been in continual agitation, as far as human experience or tradition reaches. There is not probably, at present, in the whole universe, one particle of matter at absolute rest.

And this very consideration too, continued PHILO, which we have stumbled on in the course of the argument, suggests a new hypothesis of cosmogony, that is not absolutely absurd and improbable. Is there a system, an order, an œconomy of things, by which matter can preserve that perpetual agitation, which seems essential to it, and yet

maintain a constancy in the forms, which it produces? There certainly is such an œconomy: for this is actually the case with the present world. The continual motion of matter, therefore, in less than infinite transpositions, must produce this œconomy or order; and by its very nature, that order, when once established, supports itself, for many ages, if not to eternity. But wherever matter is so poised, arranged, and adjusted as to continue in perpetual motion, and yet preserve a constancy in the forms, its situation must, of necessity, have all the same appearance of art and contrivance, which we observe at present. All the parts of each form must have a relation to each other, and to the whole: and the whole itself must have a relation to the other parts of the universe; to the element, in which the form subsists; to the materials, with which it repairs its waste and decay; and to every other form, which is hostile or friendly. A defect in any of these particulars destroys the form; and the matter, of which it is composed, is again set loose, and is thrown into irregular motions and fermentations, till it unite itself to some other regular form. If no such form be pre-

pared to receive it, and if there be a great quantity of this corrupted matter in the universe, the universe itself is entirely disordered; whether it be the feeble embryo of a world in its first beginnings, that is thus destroyed, or the rotten carcass of one, languishing in old age and infirmity. In either case, a chaos ensues; till finite, though innumerable revolutions produce at last some forms, whose parts and organs are so adjusted as to support the forms amidst a continued succession of matter.

Suppose (for we shall endeavour to vary the expression), that matter were thrown into any position, by a blind, unguided force; it is evident that this first position must in all probability be the most confused and most disorderly imaginable, without any resemblance to those works of human contrivance, which, along with a symmetry of parts, discover an adjustment of means to ends and a tendency to self-preservation. If the actuating force cease after this operation, matter must remain for ever in disorder, and continue an immense chaos, without any proportion or activity. But suppose, that the actuating force, whatever it be, still continues in matter, this first position will immediately give place to a

second, which will likewise in all probability be as disorderly as the first, and so on, through many successions of changes and revolutions. No particular order or position ever continues a moment unaltered. The original force, still remaining in activity, gives a perpetual restlessness to matter. Every possible situation is produced, and instantly destroyed. If a glimpse or dawn of order appears for a moment, it is instantly hurried away, and confounded, by that never-ceasing force, which actuates every part of matter.

Thus the universe goes on for many ages in a continued succession of chaos and disorder. But is it not possible that it may settle at last, so as not to lose its motion and active force (for that we have supposed inherent in it) yet so as to preserve an uniformity of appearance, amidst the continual motion and fluctuation of its parts? This we find to be the case with the universe at present. Every individual is perpetually changing, and every part of every individual, and yet the whole remains, in appearance, the same. May we not hope for such a position, or rather be assured of it, from the eternal revolutions of unguided matter, and may not

this account for all the appearing wisdom and contrivance, which is in the universe? Let us contemplate the subject a little, and we shall find, that this adjustment, if attained by matter, of a seeming stability in the forms, with a real and perpetual revolution or motion of parts, affords a plausible, if not a true solution of the difficulty.

It is in vain, therefore, to insist upon the uses of the parts in animals or vegetables and their curious adjustment to each other. I would fain know how an animal could subsist, unless its parts were so adjusted? Do we not find, that it immediately perishes whenever this adjustment ceases, and that its matter corrupting tries some new form. It happens, indeed, that the parts of the world are so well adjusted, that some regular form immediately lays claim to this corrupted matter: and if it were not so, could the world subsist? Must it not dissolve as well as the animal, and pass through new positions and situations; till in a great, but finite succession, it fall at last into the present or some such order?

It is well, replied CLEANTHES, you told us, that this hypothesis was suggested on a sudden, in the course of the argument. Had you had

leisure to examine it, you would soon have perceived the insuperable objections, to which it is exposed. No form, you say, can subsist, unless it possess those powers and organs, requisite for its subsistence: some new order or œconomy must be tried, and so on, without intermission; till at last some order, which can support and maintain itself, is fallen upon. But according to this hypothesis, whence arise the many conveniences and advantages which men and all animals possess? Two eyes, two ears, are not absolutely necessary for the subsistence of the species. Human race might have been propagated and preserved, without horses, dogs, cows, sheep, and those innumerable fruits and products which serve to our satisfaction and enjoyment. If no camels had been created for the use of man in the sandy deserts of AFRICA and ARABIA, would the world have been dissolved? If no loadstone had been framed to give that wonderful and useful direction to the needle, would human society and the human kind have been immediately extinguished? Though the maxims of Nature be in general very frugal, yet instances of this kind are far from being rare; and any one of them is a sufficient proof of design, and

of a benevolent design, which gave rise to the order and arrangement of the universe.

At least, you may safely infer, said PHILO, that the foregoing hypothesis is so far incomplete and imperfect; which I shall not scruple to allow. But can we ever reasonably expect greater success in any attempts of this nature? Or can we ever hope to erect a system of cosmogony, that will be liable to no exceptions, and will contain no circumstance repugnant to our limited and imperfect experience of the analogy of Nature? Your theory itself cannot surely pretend to any such advantage; even though you have run into Anthropomorphism, the better to preserve a conformity to common experience. Let us once more put it to trial. In all instances which we have ever seen, ideas are copied from real objects, and are ectypal, not archetypal, to express myself in learned terms: You reverse this order, and give thought the precedence. In all instances which we have ever seen, thought has no influence upon matter, except where that matter is so conjoined with it, as to have an equal reciprocal influence upon it. No animal can move immediately any thing but the members of its own body; and indeed,

the equality of action and re-action seems to be an universal law of Nature: But your theory implies a contradiction to this experience. These instances, with many more, which it were easy to collect (particularly the supposition of a mind or system of thought that is eternal, or in other words, an animal ingenerable and immortal), these instances, I say, may teach, all of us, sobriety in condemning each other; and let us see, that as no system of this kind ought ever to be received from a slight analogy, so neither ought any to be rejected on account of a small incongruity. For that is an inconvenience, from which we can justly pronounce no one to be exempted.

All religious systems, it is confessed, are subject to great and insuperable difficulties. Each disputant triumphs in his turn; while he carries on an offensive war, and exposes the absurdities, barbarities, and pernicious tenets of his antagonist. But all of them, on the whole, prepare a complete triumph for the Sceptic; who tells them, that no system ought ever to be embraced with regard to such subjects: For this plain reason, that no absurdity ought ever to be assented to with regard to any subject. A total suspense of

judgment is here our only reasonable resource. And if every attack, as is commonly observed, and no defence, among Theologians, is successful; how complete must be *his* victory, who remains always, with all mankind, on the offensive, and has himself no fixed station or abiding city, which he is ever, on any occasion, obliged to defend?

PART IX.

BUT if so many difficulties attend the argument *a posteriori*, said DEMEA; had we not better adhere to that simple and sublime argument *a priori*, which, by offering to us infallible demonstration, cuts off at once all doubt and difficulty? By this argument, too, we may prove the INFINITY of the divine attributes, which, I am afraid, can never be ascertained with certainty from any other topic. For how can an effect, which either is finite, or, for aught we know, may be so; how can such an effect, I say, prove an infinite cause? The unity too of the Divine Nature, it is very difficult, if not absolutely impossible, to deduce merely from contemplating the works of nature; nor will the uniformity alone of the plan, even were it allowed, give us any assurance of that attribute. Whereas the argument *a priori*

You seem to reason, DEMEA, interposed

CLEANTHES, as if those advantages and conveniences in the abstract argument were full proofs of its solidity. But it is first proper, in my opinion, to determine what argument of this nature you choose to insist on; and we shall afterwards, from itself, better than from its *useful* consequences, endeavour to determine what value we ought to put upon it.

The argument, replied DEMEA, which I would insist on is the common one. Whatever exists must have a cause or reason of its existence; it being absolutely impossible for any thing to produce itself, or be the cause of its own existence. In mounting up, therefore, from effects to causes, we must either go on in tracing an infinite succession, without any ultimate cause at all; or must at last have recourse to some ultimate cause, that is *necessarily* existent: Now that the first supposition is absurd may be thus proved. In the infinite chain or succession of causes and effects, each single effect is determined to exist by the power and efficacy of that cause, which immediately preceded; but the whole eternal chain or succession, taken together, is not determined or caused by any thing: and yet it is evident that it requires a cause or reason, as much as

any particular object, which begins to exist in time. The question is still reasonable, Why this particular succession of causes existed from eternity, and not any other succession, or no succession at all. If there be no necessarily existent being, any supposition, which can be formed, is equally possible; nor is there any more absurdity in Nothing's having existed from eternity, than there is in that succession of causes, which constitutes the universe. What was it then, which determined something to exist rather than nothing, and bestowed being on a particular possibility, exclusive of the rest? *External causes*, there are supposed to be none. *Chance* is a word without a meaning. Was it *Nothing*? But that can never produce any thing. We must, therefore, have recourse to a necessarily existent Being, who carries the REASON of his existence in himself; and who cannot be supposed not to exist without an express contradiction. There is consequently such a Being, that is, there is a Deity.

I shall not leave it to PHILO, said CLEANTHES (though I know that the starting objections is his chief delight), to point out the weakness of this metaphysical reasoning. It seems to

me so obviously ill-grounded, and at the same time of so little consequence to the cause of true piety and religion, that I shall myself venture to show the fallacy of it.

I shall begin with observing, that there is an evident absurdity in pretending to demonstrate a matter of fact, or to prove it by any arguments *a priori*. Nothing is demonstrable, unless the contrary implies a contradiction. Nothing, that is distinctly conceivable, implies a contradiction. Whatever we conceive as existent, we can also conceive as non-existent. There is no being, therefore, whose non-existence implies a contradiction. Consequently there is no being, whose existence is demonstrable. I propose this argument as entirely decisive, and am willing to rest the whole controversy upon it.

It is pretended that the Deity is a necessarily existent being; and this necessity of his existence is attempted to be explained by asserting, that, if we knew his whole essence or nature, we should perceive it to be as impossible for him not to exist as for twice two not to be four. But it is evident, that this can never happen, while our faculties remain the same as at present. It will still be pos-

sible for us, at any time, to conceive the non-existence of what we formerly conceived to exist; nor can the mind ever lie under a necessity of supposing any object to remain always in being; in the same manner as we lie under a necessity of always conceiving twice two to be four. The words, therefore, *necessary existence*, have no meaning; or, which is the same thing, none that is consistent.

But farther; why may not the material universe be the necessarily existent Being, according to this pretended explication of necessity? We dare not affirm that we know all the qualities of matter; and for aught we can determine, it may contain some qualities, which, were they known, would make its non-existence appear as great a contradiction as that twice two is five. I find only one argument employed to prove, that the material world is not the necessarily existent Being; and this argument is derived from the contingency both of the matter and the form of the world. 'Any particle of matter,' 'tis said,¹ 'may be *conceived* to be annihilated; and any form may be *conceived* to be altered. Such an annihilation or alteration, therefore, is not

¹ Dr Clarke.

impossible.' But it seems a great partiality not to perceive, that the same argument extends equally to the Deity, so far as we have any conception of him; and that the mind can at least imagine him to be non-existent, or his attributes to be altered. It must be some unknown, inconceivable qualities, which can make his non-existence appear impossible, or his attributes inalterable: And no reason can be assigned, why these qualities may not belong to matter. As they are altogether unknown and inconceivable, they can never be proved incompatible with it.

Add to this, that in tracing an eternal succession of objects, it seems absurd to inquire for a general cause or first author. How can any thing, that exists from eternity, have a cause, since that relation implies a priority in time and a beginning of existence?

In such a chain too, or succession of objects, each part is caused by that which preceded it, and causes that which succeeds it. Where then is the difficulty? But the WHOLE, you say, wants a cause. I answer, that the uniting of these parts into a whole, like the uniting of several distinct counties into one kingdom, or several distinct members into one body, is

performed merely by an arbitrary act of the mind, and has no influence on the nature of things. Did I show you the particular causes of each individual in a collection of twenty particles of matter, I should think it very unreasonable, should you afterwards ask me, what was the cause of the whole twenty. This is sufficiently explained in explaining the cause of the parts.

Though the reasonings, which you have urged, CLEANTHES, may well excuse me, said PHILO, from starting any farther difficulties; yet I cannot forbear insisting still upon another topic. 'Tis observed by arithmeticians, that the products of 9 compose always either 9 or some lesser product of 9; if you add together all the characters, of which any of the former products is composed. Thus, of 18, 27, 36, which are products of 9, you make 9 by adding 1 to 8, 2 to 7, 3 to 6. Thus, 369 is a product also of 9; and if you add 3, 6, and 9, you make 18, a lesser product of 9.¹ To a superficial observer, so wonderful a regularity may be admired as the effect either of chance or design: but a skilful algebraist immediately concludes it to be the work of necessity, and

¹ République des Lettres, Août 1685.

demonstrates, that it must for ever result from the nature of these numbers. Is it not probable, I ask, that the whole œconomy of the universe is conducted by a like necessity, though no human algebra can furnish a key, which solves the difficulty? And instead of admiring the order of natural beings, may it not happen, that, could we penetrate into the intimate nature of bodies, we should clearly see why it was absolutely impossible, they could ever admit of any other disposition? So dangerous is it to introduce this idea of necessity into the present question! and so naturally does it afford an inference directly opposite to the religious hypothesis!

But dropping all these abstractions, continued PHILO; and confining ourselves to more familiar topics; I shall venture to add an observation, that the argument *a priori* has seldom been found very convincing, except to people of a metaphysical head, who have accustomed themselves to abstract reasoning, and who finding from mathematics, that the understanding frequently leads to truth, through obscurity, and contrary to first appearances, have transferred the same habit of thinking to subjects, where it ought not to have place.

Other people, even of good sense and the best inclined to religion, feel always some deficiency in such arguments, though they are not perhaps able to explain distinctly where it lies. A certain proof, that men ever did, and ever will derive their religion from other sources than from this species of reasoning.

PART X.

IT is my opinion, I own, replied DEMEA, that each man feels, in a manner, the truth of religion within his own breast; and from a consciousness of his imbecility and misery, rather than from any reasoning, is led to seek protection from that Being, on whom he and all nature is dependent. So anxious or so tedious are even the best scenes of life, that futurity is still the object of all our hopes and fears. We incessantly look forward, and endeavour, by prayers, adoration, and sacrifice, to appease those unknown powers, whom we find, by experience, so able to afflict and oppress us. Wretched creatures that we are! what resource for us amidst the innumerable ills of life, did not Religion suggest some methods of atonement, and appease those terrors, with which we are incessantly agitated and tormented?

I am indeed persuaded, said PHILO, that the

best and indeed the only method of bringing every one to a due sense of religion, is by just representations of the misery and wickedness of men. And for that purpose a talent of eloquence and strong imagery is more requisite than that of reasoning and argument. For is it necessary to prove, what every one feels within himself? 'Tis only necessary to make us feel it, if possible, more intimately and sensibly.

The people, indeed, replied DEMEA, are sufficiently convinced of this great and melancholy truth. The miseries of life, the unhappiness of man, the general corruptions of our nature, the unsatisfactory enjoyment of pleasures, riches, honours; these phrases have become almost proverbial in all languages. And who can doubt of what all men declare from their own immediate feeling and experience?

In this point, said PHILO, the learned are perfectly agreed with the vulgar; and in all letters, *sacred* and *profane*, the topic of human misery has been insisted on with the most pathetic eloquence that sorrow and melancholy could inspire. The poets, who speak from sentiment, without a system, and whose testimony has therefore the more authority,

abound in images of this nature. From HOMER down to Dr YOUNG, the whole inspired tribe have ever been sensible, that no other representation of things would suit the feeling and observation of each individual.

As to authorities, replied DEMEA, you need not seek them. Look round this library of CLEANTHES. I shall venture to affirm, that, except authors of particular sciences, such as chemistry or botany, who have no occasion to treat of human life, there scarce is one of those innumerable writers, from whom the sense of human misery has not, in some passage or other, extorted a complaint and confession of it. At least, the chance is entirely on that side; and no one author has ever, so far as I can recollect, been so extravagant as to deny it.

There you must excuse me, said PHILO: LEIBNITZ has denied it; and is perhaps the first,¹ who ventured upon so bold and paradoxical an opinion; at least, the first, who made it essential to his philosophical system.

And by being the first, replied DEMEA, might

¹ That sentiment had been maintained by Dr King and some few others, before LEIBNITZ, though by none of so great fame as that GERMAN philosopher.

he not have been sensible of his error? For is this a subject, in which philosophers can propose to make discoveries, especially in so late an age? And can any man hope by a simple denial (for the subject scarcely admits of reasoning) to bear down the united testimony of mankind, founded on sense and consciousness?

And why should man, added he, pretend to an exemption from the lot of all other animals? The whole earth, believe me, PHILO, is cursed and polluted. A perpetual war is kindled amongst all living creatures. Necessity, hunger, want, stimulate the strong and courageous: Fear, anxiety, terror, agitate the weak and infirm. The first entrance into life gives anguish to the new-born infant and to its wretched parent: Weakness, impotence, distress, attend each stage of that life: and 'tis at last finished in agony and horror.

Observe too, says PHILO, the curious artifices of Nature, in order to embitter the life of every living being. The stronger prey upon the weaker, and keep them in perpetual terror and anxiety. The weaker too, in their turn, often prey upon the stronger, and vex and molest them without relaxation. Consider

that innumerable race of insects, which either are bred on the body of each animal, or flying about infix their stings in him. These insects have others still less than themselves, which torment them. And thus on each hand, before and behind, above and below, every animal is surrounded with enemies, which incessantly seek his misery and destruction.

Man alone, said DEMEA, seems to be, in part, an exception to this rule. For by combination in society, he can easily master lions, tigers, and bears, whose greater strength and agility naturally enable them to prey upon him.

On the contrary, it is here chiefly, cried PHILO, that the uniform and equal maxims of Nature are most apparent. Man, it is true, can, by combination, surmount all his *real* enemies, and become master of the whole animal creation: but does he not immediately raise up to himself *imaginary* enemies, the dæmons of his fancy, who haunt him with superstitious terrors, and blast every enjoyment of life? His pleasure, as he imagines, becomes, in their eyes, a crime: his food and repose give them umbrage and offence: his very sleep and dreams furnish new materials

to anxious fear: and even death, his refuge from every other ill, presents only the dread of endless and innumerable woes. Nor does the wolf molest more the timid flock, than superstition does the anxious breast of wretched mortals.

Besides, consider, DEMEA; this very society, by which we surmount those wild beasts, our natural enemies; what new enemies does it not raise to us? What woe and misery does it not occasion? Man is the greatest enemy of man. Oppression, injustice, contempt, contumely, violence, sedition, war, calumny, treachery, fraud; by these they mutually torment each other: and they would soon dissolve that society which they had formed, were it not for the dread of still greater ills, which must attend their separation.

But though these external insults, said DEMEA, from animals, from men, from all the elements, which assault us, form a frightful catalogue of woes, they are nothing in comparison of those, which arise within ourselves, from the distempered condition of our mind and body. How many lie under the lingering torment of diseases? Hear the pathetic enumeration of the great poet.

Intestine stone and ulcer, colic-pangs,
Demoniac frenzy, moping melancholy,
And moon-struck madness, pining atrophy,
Marasmus and wide-wasting pestilence.
Dire was the tossing, deep the groans : DESPAIR
Tended the sick, busiest from couch to couch.
And over them triumphant DEATH his dart
Shook, but delay'd to strike, tho' oft invoc'd
With vows, as their chief good and final hope.¹

The disorders of the mind, continued DEMENTIA, though more secret, are not perhaps less dismal and vexatious. Remorse, shame, anguish, rage, disappointment, anxiety, fear, dejection, despair; who has ever passed through life without cruel inroads from these tormentors? How many have scarcely ever felt any better sensations? Labour and poverty, so abhorred by every one, are the certain lot of the far greater number; and those few privileged persons, who enjoy ease and opulence, never reach contentment or true felicity. All the goods of life united would not make a very happy man: but all the ills united would make a wretch indeed; and any one of them almost (and who can be free from every one), nay often the absence of one good (and who can possess all), is sufficient to render life ineligible.

¹ Milton : Paradise Lost, XI.

Were a stranger to drop, on a sudden, into this world, I would show him, as a specimen of its ills, an hospital full of diseases, a prison crowded with malefactors and debtors, a field of battle strewn with carcases, a fleet floundering in the ocean, a nation languishing under tyranny, famine, or pestilence. To turn the gay side of life to him, and give him a notion of its pleasures; whither should I conduct him? to a ball, to an opera, to court? He might justly think, that I was only showing him a diversity of distress and sorrow.

There is no evading such striking instances, said PHILO, but by apologies, which still farther aggravate the charge. Why have all men, I ask, in all ages, complained incessantly of the miseries of life? They have no just reason, says one: these complaints proceed only from their discontented, repining, anxious disposition. And can there possibly, I reply, be a more certain foundation of misery, than such a wretched temper?

But if they were really as unhappy as they pretend, says my antagonist, why do they remain in life?

Not satisfied with life, afraid of death.

This is the secret chain, say I, that holds us.

We are terrified, not bribed to the continuance of our existence.

It is only a false delicacy, he may insist, which a few refined spirits indulge, and which has spread these complaints among the whole race of mankind. . . . And what is this delicacy, I ask, which you blame? Is it any thing but a greater sensibility to all the pleasures and pains of life? and if the man of a delicate, refined temper, by being so much more alive than the rest of the world, is only so much more unhappy; what judgment must we form in general of human life?

Let men remain at rest, says our adversary; and they will be easy. They are willing artificers of their own misery. . . . No! reply I; an anxious languor follows their repose: disappointment, vexation, trouble, their activity and ambition.

I can observe something like what you mention in some others, replied CLEANTHES: but I confess, I feel little or nothing of it in myself, and hope that it is not so common as you represent it.

If you feel not human misery yourself, cried DEMEA, I congratulate you on so happy a singularity. Others, seemingly the most

prosperous, have not been ashamed to vent their complaints in the most melancholy strains. Let us attend to the great, the fortunate Emperor, CHARLES V., when, tired with human grandeur, he resigned all his extensive dominions into the hands of his son. In the last harangue, which he made on that memorable occasion, he publicly avowed, *that the greatest prosperities which he had ever enjoyed, had been mixed with so many adversities, that he might truly say he had never enjoyed any satisfaction or contentment.* But did the retired life, in which he sought for shelter, afford him any greater happiness? If we may credit his son's account, his repentance commenced the very day of his resignation.

CICERO's fortune, from small beginnings, rose to the greatest lustre and renown; yet what pathetic complaints of the ills of life do his familiar letters, as well as philosophical discourses, contain? And suitably to his own experience, he introduces CATO, the great, the fortunate CATO, protesting in his old age, that, had he a new life in his offer, he would reject the present.

Ask yourself, ask any of your acquaintance,

whether they would live over again the last ten or twenty years of their lives. No! but the next twenty, they say, will be better:

And from the dregs of life, hope to receive
What the first sprightly running could not give.¹

Thus at last they find (such is the greatness of human misery; it reconciles even contradictions) that they complain, at once, of the shortness of life, and of its vanity and sorrow.

And is it possible, CLEANTHES, said PHILO, that after all these reflections, and infinitely more, which might be suggested, you can still persevere in your Anthropomorphism, and assert the moral attributes of the Deity, his justice, benevolence, mercy, and rectitude, to be of the same nature with these virtues in human creatures? His power we allow infinite: whatever he wills is executed: but neither man nor any other animal is happy: therefore he does not will their happiness. His wisdom is infinite: he is never mistaken in choosing the means to any end: but the course of nature tends not to human or animal felicity: therefore it is not established for that purpose. Through the whole compass of human knowledge, there are no infer-

¹ Dryden: *Aurungzebe*, Act IV., sc. i.

ences more certain and infallible than these. In what respect, then, do his benevolence and mercy resemble the benevolence and mercy of men?

EPICURUS's old questions are yet unanswered.

Is he willing to prevent evil, but not able? then is he impotent. Is he able, but not willing? then is he malevolent. Is he both able and willing? whence then is evil?

You ascribe, CLEANTHES, (and I believe justly) a purpose and intention to Nature. But what, I beseech you, is the object of that curious artifice and machinery, which she has displayed in all animals? The preservation alone of individuals and propagation of the species. It seems enough for her purpose, if such a rank be barely upheld in the universe, without any care or concern for the happiness of the members that compose it. No resource for this purpose: no machinery, in order merely to give pleasure or ease: no fund of pure joy and contentment: no indulgence without some want or necessity accompanying it. At least, the few phenomena of this nature are overbalanced by opposite phenomena of still greater importance.

Our sense of music, harmony, and indeed

beauty of all kinds, gives satisfaction, without being absolutely necessary to the preservation and propagation of the species. But what racking pains, on the other hand, arise from gouts, gravels, megrims, tooth-aches, rheumatisms; where the injury to the animal-machinery is either small or incurable? Mirth, laughter, play, frolic, seem gratuitous satisfactions, which have no farther tendency: spleen, melancholy, discontent, superstition, are pains of the same nature. How then does the divine benevolence display itself, in the sense of you Anthropomorphites? None but we Mystics, as you were pleased to call us, can account for this strange mixture of phenomena, by deriving it from attributes, infinitely perfect, but incomprehensible.

And have you at last, said CLEANTHES smiling, betrayed your intentions, PHILO? Your long agreement with DEMEA did indeed a little surprise me; but I find you were all the while erecting a concealed battery against me. And I must confess, that you have now fallen upon a subject, worthy of your noble spirit of opposition and controversy. If you can make out the present point, and prove mankind to be unhappy or corrupted, there

is an end at once of all religion. For to what purpose establish the natural attributes of the Deity, while the moral are still doubtful and uncertain?

You take umbrage very easily, replied DEMEA, at opinions the most innocent, and the most generally received even amongst the religious and devout themselves: and nothing can be more surprising than to find a topic like this, concerning the wickedness and misery of man, charged with no less than Atheism and profaneness. Have not all pious divines and preachers, who have indulged their rhetoric on so fertile a subject; have they not easily, I say, given a solution of any difficulties, which may attend it? This world is but a point in comparison of the universe; this life but a moment in comparison of eternity. The present evil phenomena, therefore, are rectified in other regions, and in some future period of existence. And the eyes of men, being then opened to larger views of things, see the whole connection of general laws; and trace, with adoration, the benevolence and rectitude of the Deity, through all the mazes and intricacies of his providence.

No! replied CLEANTHES, No! These arbitrary suppositions can never be admitted, contrary to matter of fact, visible and uncontroverted. Whence can any cause be known but from its known effects? Whence can any hypothesis be proved but from the apparent phenomena? To establish one hypothesis upon another, is building entirely in the air; and the utmost we ever attain, by these conjectures and fictions, is to ascertain the bare possibility of our opinion; but never can we, upon such terms, establish its reality.

The only method of supporting divine benevolence (and it is what I willingly embrace) is to deny absolutely the misery and wickedness of man. Your representations are exaggerated: Your melancholy views mostly fictitious: Your inferences contrary to fact and experience. Health is more common than sickness: Pleasure than pain: Happiness than misery. And for one vexation, which we meet with, we attain, upon computation, a hundred enjoyments.

Admitting your position, replied PHILO, which yet is extremely doubtful, you must, at the same time, allow, that, if pain be less frequent than pleasure, it is infinitely

more violent and durable. One hour of it is often able to outweigh a day, a week, a month of our common insipid enjoyments: And how many days, weeks, and months are passed by several in the most acute torments? Pleasure, scarcely in one instance, is ever able to reach ecstasy and rapture: And in no one instance can it continue for any time at its highest pitch and altitude. The spirits evaporate; the nerves relax; the fabric is disordered; and the enjoyment quickly degenerates into fatigue and uneasiness. But pain often, good God, how often! rises to torture and agony; and the longer it continues, it becomes still more genuine agony and torture. Patience is exhausted; courage languishes; melancholy seizes us; and nothing terminates our misery but the removal of its cause, or another event, which is the sole cure of all evil, but which, from our natural folly, we regard with still greater horror and consternation.

But not to insist upon these topics, continued PHILO, though most obvious, certain, and important; I must use the freedom to admonish you, CLEANTHES, that you have put this controversy upon a most dangerous issue,

and are unawares introducing a total Scepticism, into the most essential articles of natural and revealed theology. What! no method of fixing a just foundation for religion, unless we allow the happiness of human life, and maintain a continued existence even in this world, with all our present pains, infirmities, vexations, and follies, to be eligible and desirable! But this is contrary to every one's feeling and experience: It is contrary to an authority so established as nothing can subvert: No decisive proofs can ever be produced against this authority; nor is it possible for you to compute, estimate, and compare all the pains and all the pleasures in the lives of all men and of all animals: And thus by your resting the whole system of religion on a point, which, from its very nature, must for ever be uncertain, you tacitly confess, that that system is equally uncertain.

But allowing you, what never will be believed; at least, what you never possibly can prove, that animal, or at least, human happiness, in this life, exceeds its misery; you have yet done nothing: For this is not, by any means, what we expect from infinite

✓ power, infinite wisdom, and infinite goodness. Why is there any misery at all in the world? Not by chance surely. From some cause then. Is it from the intention of the Deity? But he is perfectly benevolent. Is it contrary to his intention? But he is almighty. Nothing can shake the solidity of this reasoning, so short, so clear, so decisive; except we assert, that these subjects exceed all human capacity, and that our common measures of truth and falsehood are not applicable to them; a topic, which I have all along insisted on, but which you have, from the beginning, rejected with scorn and indignation.

But I will be contented to retire still from this intrenchment: For I deny that you can ever force me in it: I will allow, that pain or misery in man is *compatible* with infinite power and goodness in the Deity, even in your sense of these attributes: What are you advanced by all these concessions? A mere possible compatibility is not sufficient. You must *prove* these pure, unmixed, and uncontrollable attributes from the present mixed and confused phenomena, and from these alone. A hopeful undertaking! Were the phenomena ever so pure and unmixed, yet being finite, they

would be insufficient for that purpose. How much more, where they are also so jarring and discordant!

Here, CLEANTHES, I find myself at ease in my argument. Here I triumph. Formerly, when we argued concerning the natural attributes of intelligence and design, I needed all my sceptical and metaphysical subtilty to elude your grasp. In many views of the universe, and of its parts, particularly the latter, the beauty and fitness of final causes strike us with such irresistible force, that all objections appear (what I believe they really are) mere cavils and sophisms; nor can we then imagine how it was ever possible for us to repose any weight on them. But there is no view of human life or of the condition of mankind, from which, without the greatest violence, we can infer the moral attributes, or learn that infinite benevolence, conjoined with infinite power and infinite wisdom, which we must discover by the eyes of faith alone. It is your turn now to tug the labouring oar, and to support your philosophical subtilties against the dictates of plain reason and experience.

PART XI.

I SCRUPLE not to allow, said CLEANTHES, that I have been apt to suspect the frequent repetition of the word, *infinite*, which we meet with in all theological writers, to savour more of panegyric than of philosophy, and that any purposes of reasoning, and even of religion, would be better served, were we to rest contented with more accurate and more moderate expressions. The terms, *admirable*, *excellent*, *superlatively great*, *wise*, and *holy*; these sufficiently fill the imaginations of men; and any thing beyond, besides that it leads into absurdities, has no influence on your affections or sentiments. Thus, in the present subject, if we abandon all human analogy, as seems your intention, DEMEA, I am afraid we abandon all religion, and retain no conception of the great object of our adoration. If we preserve human analogy, we must for ever find it impossible to reconcile any mixture of evil in

the universe with infinite attributes; much less can we ever prove the latter from the former. But supposing the Author of Nature to be finitely perfect, though far exceeding mankind; a satisfactory account may then be given of natural and moral evil, and every untoward phenomenon be explained and adjusted. A less evil may then be chosen, in order to avoid a greater; Inconveniences be submitted to, in order to reach a desirable end: And in a word, benevolence, regulated by wisdom, and limited by necessity, may produce just such a world as the present. You, PHILO, who are so prompt at starting views, and reflections, and analogies, I would gladly hear, at length, without interruption, your opinion of this new theory; and if it deserve our attention, we may afterwards, at more leisure, reduce it into form.

My sentiments, replied PHILO, are not worth being made a mystery of; and therefore, without any ceremony, I shall deliver what occurs to me with regard to the present subject. It must, I think, be allowed, that, if a very limited intelligence, whom we shall suppose utterly unacquainted with the universe, were assured, that it were the production of a

very good, wise, and powerful being, however finite, he would, from his conjectures, form *beforehand* a different notion of it from what we find it to be by experience; nor would he ever imagine, merely from these attributes of the cause, of which he is informed, that the effect could be so full of vice and misery and disorder, as it appears in this life. Supposing now, that this person were brought into the world, still assured, that it was the workmanship of such a sublime and benevolent Being; he might, perhaps, be surprised at the disappointment; but would never retract his former belief, if founded on any very solid argument; since such a limited intelligence must be sensible of his own blindness and ignorance, and must allow, that there may be many solutions of those phenomena, which will for ever escape his comprehension. But supposing, which is the real case with regard to man, that this creature is not antecedently convinced of a supreme intelligence, benevolent, and powerful, but is left to gather such a belief from the appearances of things; this entirely alters the case, nor will he ever find any reason for such a conclusion. He may be fully convinced of the narrow limits

of his understanding; but this will not help him in forming an inference concerning the goodness of superior powers, since he must form that inference from what he knows, not from what he is ignorant of. The more you exaggerate his weakness and ignorance, the more diffident you render him, and give him the greater suspicion, that such subjects are beyond the reach of his faculties. You are obliged, therefore, to reason with him merely from the known phenomena, and to drop every arbitrary supposition or conjecture.

Did I show you a house or palace, where there was not one apartment convenient or agreeable; where the windows, doors, fires, passages, stairs, and the whole œconomy of the building were the source of noise, confusion, fatigue, darkness, and the extremes of heat and cold; you would certainly blame the contrivance, without any farther examination. The architect would in vain display his subtilty, and prove to you, that if this door or that window were altered, greater ills would ensue. What he says, may be strictly true: The alteration of one particular, while the other parts of the building remain, may only augment the inconveniences. But still you

would assert in general, that, if the architect had had skill and good intentions, he might have formed such a plan of the whole, and might have adjusted the parts in such a manner, as would have remedied all or most of these inconveniences. His ignorance, or even your own ignorance of such a plan, will never convince you of the impossibility of it. If you find many inconveniences and deformities in the building, you will always, without entering into any detail, condemn the architect.

In short, I repeat the question: Is the world considered in general, and as it appears to us in this life, different from what a man or such a limited Being would, *beforehand*, expect from a very powerful, wise, and benevolent Deity? It must be strange prejudice to assert the contrary. And from thence I conclude, that, however consistent the world may be, allowing certain suppositions and conjectures, with the idea of such a Deity, it can never afford us an inference concerning his existence. The consistence is not absolutely denied, only the inference. Conjectures, especially where infinity is excluded from the Divine attributes, may perhaps be sufficient to prove a consist-

ence; but can never be foundations for any inference.

There seem to be *four* circumstances, on which depend all, or the greatest parts of the ills, that molest sensible creatures; and it is not impossible but all these circumstances may be necessary and unavoidable. We know so little beyond common life, or even of common life, that, with regard to the œconomy of a universe, there is no conjecture, however wild, which may not be just; nor any one, however plausible, which may not be erroneous. All that belongs to human understanding, in this deep ignorance and obscurity, is to be sceptical, or at least cautious; and not to admit of any hypothesis, whatever; much less, of any which is supported by no appearance of probability. Now this I assert to be the case with regard to all the causes of evil, and the circumstances, on which it depends. None of them appear to human reason, in the least degree, necessary or unavoidable; nor can we suppose them such, without the utmost licence of imagination.

The *first* circumstance which introduces evil, is that contrivance or œconomy of the animal creation, by which pains, as well as pleasures,

are employed to excite all creatures to action, and make them vigilant in the great work of self-preservation. Now pleasure alone, in its various degrees, seems to human understanding sufficient for this purpose. All animals might be constantly in a state of enjoyment; but when urged by any of the necessities of nature, such as thirst, hunger, weariness; instead of pain, they might feel a diminution of pleasure, by which they might be prompted to seek that object, which is necessary to their subsistence. Men pursue pleasure as eagerly as they avoid pain; at least, might have been so constituted. It seems, therefore, plainly possible to carry on the business of life without any pain. Why then is any animal ever rendered susceptible of such a sensation? If animals can be free from it an hour, they might enjoy a perpetual exemption from it; and it required as particular a contrivance of their organs to produce that feeling, as to endow them with sight, hearing, or any of the senses. Shall we conjecture, that such a contrivance was necessary, without any appearance of reason? and shall we build on that conjecture as on the most certain truth?

But a capacity of pain would not alone

produce pain, were it not for the *second* circumstance, viz. the conducting of the world by general laws; and this seems nowise necessary to a very perfect being. It is true; if every thing were conducted by particular volitions, the course of nature would be perpetually broken, and no man could employ his reason in the conduct of life. But might not other particular volitions remedy this inconvenience? In short, might not the Deity exterminate all ill, wherever it were to be found; and produce all good, without any preparation or long progress of causes and effects?

Besides, we must consider, that, according to the present œconomy of the world, the course of Nature, though supposed exactly regular, yet to us appears not so, and many events are uncertain, and many disappoint our expectations. Health and sickness, calm and tempest, with an infinite number of other accidents, whose causes are unknown and variable, have a great influence both on the fortunes of particular persons and on the prosperity of public societies: and indeed all human life, in a manner, depends on such accidents. A being, therefore, who knows the secret springs of the universe, might easily, by particular

volitions, turn all these accidents to the good of mankind, and render the whole world happy, without discovering himself in any operation. A fleet, whose purposes were salutary to society, might always meet with a fair wind: Good princes enjoy sound health and long life: Persons, born to power and authority, be framed with good tempers and virtuous dispositions. A few such events as these, regularly and wisely conducted, would change the face of the world; and yet would no more seem to disturb the course of Nature or confound human conduct, than the present œconomy of things, where the causes are secret, and variable, and compounded. Some small touches, given to CALIGULA's brain in his infancy, might have converted him into a TRAJAN: one wave, a little higher than the rest, by burying CÆSAR and his fortune in the bottom of the ocean, might have restored liberty to a considerable part of mankind. There may, for aught we know, be good reasons, why Providence interposes not in this manner; but they are unknown to us: and though the mere supposition, that such reasons exist, may be sufficient to *save* the conclusion concerning the divine attributes,

yet surely it can never be sufficient to *establish* that conclusion.

If every thing in the universe be conducted by general laws, and if animals be rendered susceptible of pain, it scarcely seems possible but some ill must arise in the various shocks of matter, and the various concurrence and opposition of general laws: But this ill would be very rare, were it not for the *third* circumstance, which I proposed to mention, viz. the great frugality with which all powers and faculties are distributed to every particular being. So well adjusted are the organs and capacities of all animals, and so well fitted to their preservation, that, as far as history or tradition reaches, there appears not to be any single species, which has yet been extinguished in the universe. Every animal has the requisite endowments; but these endowments are bestowed with so scrupulous an œconomy, that any considerable diminution must entirely destroy the creature. Wherever one power is increased, there is a proportional abatement in the others. Animals, which excel in swiftness, are commonly defective in force. Those, which possess both, are either imperfect in some of their senses, or

are oppressed with the most craving wants. The human species, whose chief excellency is reason and sagacity, is of all others the most necessitous, and the most deficient in bodily advantages; without clothes, without arms, without food, without lodging, without any convenience of life, except what they owe to their own skill and industry. In short, Nature seems to have formed an exact calculation of the necessities of her creatures; and like a *rigid master*, has afforded them little more powers or endowments, than what are strictly sufficient to supply those necessities. An *indulgent parent* would have bestowed a large stock, in order to guard against accidents, and secure the happiness and welfare of the creature, in the most unfortunate concurrence of circumstances. Every course of life would not have been so surrounded with precipices, that the least departure from the true path, by mistake or necessity, must involve us in misery and ruin. Some reserve, some fund would have been provided to ensure happiness; nor would the powers and the necessities have been adjusted with so rigid an œconomy. The author of Nature is inconceivably powerful: his force is supposed great,

if not altogether inexhaustible: nor is there any reason, as far as we can judge, to make him observe this strict frugality in his dealings with his creatures. It would have been better, were his power extremely limited, to have created fewer animals, and to have endowed these with more faculties for their happiness and preservation. A builder is never esteemed prudent, who undertakes a plan, beyond what his stock will enable him to finish.

In order to cure most of the ills of human life, I require not that man should have the wings of the eagle, the swiftness of the stag, the force of the ox, the arms of the lion, the scales of the crocodile or rhinoceros; much less do I demand the sagacity of an angel or cherubin. I am contented to take an increase in one single power or faculty of his soul. Let him be endowed with a greater propensity to industry and labour; a more vigorous spring and activity of mind; a more constant bent to business and application. Let the whole species possess naturally an equal diligence with that which many individuals are able to attain by habit and reflection; and the most beneficial consequences, without any

alloy of ill, is the immediate and necessary result of this endowment. Almost all the moral, as well as natural evils of human life arise from idleness; and were our species, by the original constitution of their frame, exempt from this vice or infirmity, the perfect cultivation of land, the improvement of arts and manufactures, the exact execution of every office and duty, immediately follow; and men at once may fully reach that state of society, which is so imperfectly attained by the best-regulated government. But as industry is a power, and the most valuable of any, Nature seems determined, suitably to her usual maxims, to bestow it on men with a very sparing hand; and rather to punish him severely for his deficiency in it, than to reward him for his attainments. She has so contrived his frame, that nothing but the most violent necessity can oblige him to labour; and she employs all his other wants to overcome, at least in part, the want of diligence, and to endow him with some share of a faculty, of which she has thought fit naturally to bereave him. Here our demands may be allowed very humble, and therefore the more reasonable. If we required the endowments of superior pene-

tration and judgment, of a more delicate taste of beauty, of a nicer sensibility to benevolence and friendship; we might be told, that we impiously pretend to break the order of Nature, that we want to exalt ourselves into a higher rank of being, that the presents which we require, not being suitable to our state and condition, would only be pernicious to us. But it is hard; I dare to repeat it, it is hard, that being placed in a world so full of wants and necessities; where almost every being and element is either our foe or refuses us their assistance, . . . we should also have our own temper to struggle with, and should be deprived of that faculty, which can alone fence against these multiplied evils.

The *fourth* circumstance, whence arises the misery and ill of the universe, is the inaccurate workmanship of all the springs and principles of the great machine of nature. It must be acknowledged, that there are few parts of the universe, which seem not to serve some purpose, and whose removal would not produce a visible defect and disorder in the whole. The parts hang all together; nor can one be touched without affecting the rest in a greater or less degree. But at the same time, it

must be observed, that none of these parts or principles, however useful, are so accurately adjusted, as to keep precisely within those bounds, in which their utility consists; but they are, all of them, apt, on every occasion, to run into the one extreme or the other. One would imagine, that this grand production had not received the last hand of the maker; so little finished is every part, and so coarse are the strokes, with which it is executed. Thus, the winds are requisite to convey the vapours along the surface of the globe, and to assist men in navigation: but how oft, rising up to tempests and hurricanes, do they become pernicious? Rains are necessary to nourish all the plants and animals of the earth: but how often are they defective? how often excessive? Heat is requisite to all life and vegetation; but is not always found in the due proportion. On the mixture and secretion of the humours and juices of the body depend the health and prosperity of the animal: but the parts perform not regularly their proper function. What more useful than all the passions of the mind, ambition, vanity, love, anger? But how oft do they break their bounds, and cause the greatest convulsions in

society? There is nothing so advantageous in the universe, but what frequently becomes pernicious, by its excess or defect; nor has Nature guarded, with the requisite accuracy, against all disorder or confusion. The irregularity is never, perhaps, so great as to destroy any species; but is often sufficient to involve the individuals in ruin and misery.

On the concurrence, then, of these *four* circumstances does all, or the greatest part of natural evil depend. Were all living creatures incapable of pain, or were the world administered by particular volitions, evil never could have found access into the universe: and were animals endowed with a large stock of powers and faculties, beyond what strict necessity requires; or were the several springs and principles of the universe so accurately framed as to preserve always the just temperament and medium; there must have been very little ill in comparison of what we feel at present. What then shall we pronounce on this occasion? Shall we say, that these circumstances are not necessary, and that they might easily have been altered in the contrivance of the universe? This decision seems too presumptuous for creatures, so blind and ignorant.

Let us be more modest in our conclusions. Let us allow, that, if the goodness of the Deity (I mean a goodness like the human) could be established on any tolerable reasons *a priori*, these phenomena, however untoward, would not be sufficient to subvert that principle; but might easily, in some unknown manner, be reconcilable to it. But let us still assert, that as this goodness is not antecedently established, but must be inferred from the phenomena, there can be no grounds for such an inference, while there are so many ills in the universe, and while these ills might so easily have been remedied, as far as human understanding can be allowed to judge on such a subject. I am Sceptic enough to allow, that the bad appearances, notwithstanding all my reasonings, may be compatible with such attributes as you suppose: But surely they can never prove these attributes. Such a conclusion cannot result from Scepticism; but must arise from the phenomena, and from our confidence in the reasonings, which we deduce from these phenomena.

Look round this universe. What an immense profusion of beings, animated and organized, sensible and active! You admire this

prodigious variety and fecundity. But inspect a little more narrowly these living existences, the only beings worth regarding. How hostile and destructive to each other! How insufficient all of them for their own happiness! How contemptible or odious to the spectator! The whole presents nothing but the idea of a blind Nature, impregnated by a great vivifying principle, and pouring forth from her lap, without discernment or parental care, her maimed and abortive children!

Here the MANICHÆAN system occurs as a proper hypothesis to solve the difficulty: and no doubt, in some respects, it is very specious, and has more probability than the common hypothesis, by giving a plausible account of the strange mixture of good and ill, which appears in life. But if we consider, on the other hand, the perfect uniformity and agreement of the parts of the universe, we shall not discover in it any marks of the combat of a malevolent with a benevolent being. There is indeed an opposition of pains and pleasures in the feelings of sensible creatures: but are not all the operations of Nature carried on by an opposition of principles, of hot and cold, moist and dry, light and heavy? The

true conclusion is, that the original source of all things is entirely indifferent to all these principles, and has no more regard to good above ill than to heat above cold, or to drought above moisture, or to light above heavy.

There may *four* hypotheses be framed concerning the first causes of the universe: *that* they are endowed with perfect goodness, *that* they have perfect malice, *that* they are opposite and have both goodness and malice, *that* they have neither goodness nor malice. Mixed phenomena can never prove the two former unmixed principles. And the uniformity and steadiness of general laws seem to oppose the third. The fourth, therefore, seems by far the most probable.

What I have said concerning natural evil will apply to moral, with little or no variation; and we have no more reason to infer, that the rectitude of the Supreme Being resembles human rectitude than that his benevolence resembles the human. Nay, it will be thought, that we have still greater cause to exclude from him moral sentiments, such as we feel them; since moral evil, in the opinion of many, is much more predominant

above moral good than natural evil above natural good.

But even though this should not be allowed, and though the virtue, which is in mankind, should be acknowledged much superior to the vice; yet so long as there is any vice at all in the universe, it will very much puzzle you Anthropomorphites, how to account for it. You must assign a cause for it, without having recourse to the first cause. But as every effect must have a cause, and that cause another; you must either carry on the progression *in infinitum*, or rest on that original principle, who is the ultimate cause of all things

Hold! hold! cried DEMEA: Whither does your imagination hurry you? I joined in alliance with you, in order to prove the incomprehensible nature of the Divine Being, and refute the principles of CLEANTHES, who would measure every thing by a human rule and standard. But I now find you running into all the topics of the greatest libertines and infidels; and betraying that holy cause, which you seemingly espoused. Are you secretly, then, a more dangerous enemy than CLEANTHES himself?

And are you so late in perceiving it? replied CLEANTHES. Believe me, DEMEA; your friend PHILO, from the beginning, has been amusing himself at both our expense; and it must be confessed, that the injudicious reasoning of our vulgar theology has given him but too just a handle of ridicule. The total infirmity of human reason, the absolute incomprehensibility of the Divine Nature, the great and universal misery and still greater wickedness of men; these are strange topics surely to be so fondly cherished by orthodox divines and doctors. In ages of stupidity and ignorance, indeed, these principles may safely be espoused; and perhaps, no views of things are more proper to promote superstition, than such as encourage the blind amazement, the diffidence, and melancholy of mankind. But at present

Blame not so much, interposed PHILO, the ignorance of these reverend gentlemen. They know how to change their style with the times. Formerly it was a most popular theological topic to maintain, that human life was vanity and misery, and to exaggerate all the ills and pains, which are incident to men. But of late years, divines, we find, begin to

retract this position, and maintain, though still with some hesitation, that there are more goods than evils, more pleasures than pains, even in this life. When religion stood entirely upon temper and education, it was thought proper to encourage melancholy; as indeed, mankind never have recourse to superior powers so readily as in that disposition. But as men have now learned to form principles, and to draw consequences, it is necessary to change the batteries, and to make use of such arguments as will endure, at least some scrutiny and examination. This variation is the same (and from the same causes) with that which I formerly remarked with regard to Scepticism.

Thus PHILO continued to the last his spirit of opposition, and his censure of established opinions. But I could observe, that DEMEA did not at all relish the latter part of the discourse; and he took occasion soon after, on some pretence or other, to leave the company.

PART XII.

AFTER DEMEA'S departure, CLEANTHES and PHILO continued the conversation in the following manner. Our friend, I am afraid, said CLEANTHES, will have little inclination to revive this topic of discourse, while you are in company; and to tell truth, PHILO, I should rather wish to reason with either of you apart on a subject so sublime and interesting. Your spirit of controversy, joined to your abhorrence of vulgar superstition, carries you strange lengths, when engaged in an argument; and there is nothing so sacred and venerable, even in your own eyes, which you spare on that occasion.

I must confess, replied PHILO, that I am less cautious on the subject of Natural Religion than on any other; both because I know that I can never, on that head, corrupt the principles of any man of common sense, and because no one, I am confident, in whose eyes

I appear a man of common sense, will ever mistake my intentions. You, in particular, CLEANTHES, with whom I live in unreserved intimacy; you are sensible, that, notwithstanding the freedom of my conversation, and my love of singular arguments, no one has a deeper sense of religion impressed on his mind, or pays more profound adoration to the Divine Being, as he discovers himself to reason, in the inexplicable contrivance and artifice of Nature. A purpose, an intention, a design strikes everywhere the most careless, the most stupid thinker; and no man can be so hardened in absurd systems, as at all times to reject it. *That Nature does nothing in vain*, is a maxim established in all the schools, merely from the contemplation of the works of Nature, without any religious purpose; and, from a firm conviction of its truth, an anatomist, who had observed a new organ or canal, would never be satisfied, till he had also discovered its use and intention. One great foundation of the COPERNICAN system is the maxim, *That Nature acts by the simplest methods, and chooses the most proper means to any end*; and astronomers often, without thinking of it, lay this strong foundation of piety and religion. The same

thing is observable in other parts of philosophy: and thus all the sciences almost lead us insensibly to acknowledge a first intelligent Author; and their authority is often so much the greater, as they do not directly profess that intention.

It is with pleasure I hear GALEN reason concerning the structure of the human body. The anatomy of a man, says he,¹ discovers above 600 different muscles; and whoever duly considers these, will find, that in each of them Nature must have adjusted at least ten different circumstances, in order to attain the end which she proposed; proper figure, just magnitude, right disposition of the several ends, upper and lower position of the whole, the due insertion of the several nerves, veins, and arteries: So that in the muscles alone, above 6000 several views and intentions must have been formed and executed. The bones he calculates to be 284: The distinct purposes, aimed at in the structure of each, above forty. What a prodigious display of artifice, even in these simple and homogeneous parts! But if we consider the skin, ligaments, vessels, glandules, humours, the several limbs and members of

¹ De formatione Fœtus.

the body; how must our astonishment rise upon us, in proportion to the number and intricacy of the parts so artificially adjusted! The farther we advance in these researches, we discover new scenes of art and wisdom: But descry still, at a distance, farther scenes beyond our reach; in the fine internal structure of the parts, in the œconomy of the brain, in the fabric of the seminal vessels. All these artifices are repeated in every different species of animal, with wonderful variety, and with exact propriety, suited to the different intentions of Nature, in framing each species. And if the infidelity of GALEN, even when these natural sciences were still imperfect, could not withstand such striking appearances; to what pitch of pertinacious obstinacy must a philosopher in this age have attained, who can now doubt of a Supreme Intelligence?

Could I meet with one of this species (who, I thank God, are very rare) I would ask him: Supposing there were a God, who did not discover himself immediately to our senses; were it possible for him to give stronger proofs of his existence, than what appear on the whole face of Nature? What indeed could such a divine Being do, but copy the present œconomy

of things; render many of his artifices so plain, that no stupidity could mistake them; afford glimpses of still greater artifices, which demonstrate his prodigious superiority above our narrow apprehensions; and conceal altogether a great many from such imperfect creatures? Now according to all rules of just reasoning, every fact must pass for undisputed, when it is supported by all the arguments, which its nature admits of; even though these arguments be not, in themselves, very numerous or forcible: How much more, in the present case, where no human imagination can compute their number, and no understanding estimate their cogency!

I shall farther add, said CLEANTHES, to what you have so well urged, that one great advantage of the principle of Theism, is, that it is the only system of cosmogony, which can be rendered intelligible and complete, and yet can throughout preserve a strong analogy to what we every day see and experience in the world. The comparison of the universe to a machine of human contrivance is so obvious and natural, and is justified by so many instances of order and design in Nature, that it must immediately strike all unprejudiced apprehensions, and pro-

cure universal approbation. Whoever attempts to weaken this theory, cannot pretend to succeed by establishing in its place any other, that is precise and determinate: It is sufficient for him, if he start doubts and difficulties; and by remote and abstract views of things, reach that suspense of judgment, which is here the utmost boundary of his wishes. But besides, that this state of mind is in itself unsatisfactory, it can never be steadily maintained against such striking appearances, as continually engage us into the religious hypothesis. A false, absurd system, human nature, from the force of prejudice, is capable of adhering to, with obstinacy and perseverance: But no system at all, in opposition to a theory, supported by strong and obvious reason, by natural propensity, and by early education, I think it absolutely impossible to maintain or defend.

So little, replied PHILO, do I esteem this suspense of judgment in the present case to be possible, that I am apt to suspect there enters somewhat of a dispute of words into this controversy, more than is usually imagined. That the works of Nature bear a great analogy to the productions of art is evident: and according to all the rules of good reasoning, we

ought to infer, if we argue at all concerning them, that their causes have a proportional analogy. But as there are also considerable differences, we have reason to suppose a proportional difference in the causes; and in particular ought to attribute a much higher degree of power and energy to the supreme cause than any we have ever observed in mankind. Here then the existence of a DEITY is plainly ascertained by reason; and if we make it a question, whether, on account of these analogies, we can properly call him a *mind* or *intelligence*, notwithstanding the vast difference, which may reasonably be supposed between him and human minds; what is this but a mere verbal controversy? No man can deny the analogies between the effects: To restrain ourselves from enquiring concerning the causes is scarcely possible: From this enquiry, the legitimate conclusion is, that the causes have also an analogy: And if we are not contented with calling the first and supreme cause a GOD or DEITY, but desire to vary the expression; what can we call him but MIND or THOUGHT, to which he is justly supposed to bear a considerable resemblance?

All men of sound reason are disgusted with

verbal disputes, which abound so much in philosophical and theological enquiries; and it is found, that the only remedy for this abuse must arise from clear definitions, from the precision of those ideas which enter into any argument, and from the strict and uniform use of those terms which are employed. But there is a species of controversy, which, from the very nature of language and of human ideas, is involved in perpetual ambiguity, and can never, by any precaution or any definitions, be able to reach a reasonable certainty or precision. These are the controversies concerning the degrees of any quality or circumstance. Men may argue to all eternity, whether HANNIBAL be a great, or a very great, or a superlatively great man, what degree of beauty CLEOPATRA possessed, what epithet of praise LIVY or THUCYDIDES is entitled to, without bringing the controversy to any determination. The disputants may here agree in their sense, and differ in the terms, or *vice versa*; yet never be able to define their terms, so as to enter into each other's meaning: Because the degrees of these qualities are not, like quantity or number, susceptible of any exact mensuration, which may be the standard in the con-

troversy. That the dispute concerning Theism is of this nature, and consequently is merely verbal, or perhaps, if possible, still more incurably ambiguous, will appear upon the slightest enquiry. I ask the Theist, if he does not allow, that there is a great and immeasurable, because incomprehensible, difference between the *human* and the *divine* mind: The more pious he is, the more readily will he assent to the affirmative, and the more will he be disposed to magnify the difference: He will even assert, that the difference is of a nature which cannot be too much magnified. I next turn to the Atheist, who, I assert, is only nominally so, and can never possibly be in earnest; and I ask him, whether, from the coherence and apparent sympathy in all the parts of this world, there be not a certain degree of analogy among all the operations of Nature, in every situation and in every age; whether the rotting of a turnip, the generation of an animal, and the structure of human thought be not energies that probably bear some remote analogy to each other: It is impossible he can deny it: He will readily acknowledge it. Having obtained this concession, I push him still farther

in his retreat; and I ask him, if it be not probable, that the principle which first arranged, and still maintains order in this universe, bears not also some remote inconceivable analogy to the other operations of Nature, and among the rest to the œconomy of human mind and thought. However reluctant, he must give his assent. Where then, cry I to both these antagonists, is the subject of your dispute? The Theist allows, that the original intelligence is very different from human reason: The Atheist allows, that the original principle of order bears some remote analogy to it. Will you quarrel, Gentlemen, about the degrees, and enter into a controversy, which admits not of any precise meaning, nor consequently of any determination? If you should be so obstinate, I should not be surprised to find you insensibly change sides; while the Theist on the one hand exaggerates the dissimilarity between the Supreme Being, and frail, imperfect, variable, fleeting, and mortal creatures; and the Atheist on the other magnifies the analogy among all the operations of Nature, in every period, every situation, and every position. Consider then, where the real point of controversy lies, and

if you cannot lay aside your disputes, endeavour, at least, to cure yourselves of your animosity.

And here I must also acknowledge, CLE-
ANTHES, that, as the works of Nature have a much greater analogy to the effects of *our* art and contrivance, than to those of *our* benevolence and justice; we have reason to infer that the natural attributes of the Deity have a greater resemblance to those of man, than his moral have to human virtues. But what is the consequence? Nothing but this, that the moral qualities of man are more defective in their kind than his natural abilities. For, as the Supreme Being is allowed to be absolutely and entirely perfect, whatever differs most from him departs the farthest from the supreme standard of rectitude and perfection.¹

¹ It seems evident, that the dispute between the Sceptics and Dogmatists is entirely verbal, or at least regards only the degrees of doubt and assurance, which we ought to indulge with regard to all reasoning: And such disputes are commonly, at the bottom, verbal, and admit not of any precise determination. No philosophical Dogmatist denies, that there are difficulties both with regard to the senses and to all science; and that these difficulties are in a regular, logical method, absolutely insolvable. No

These, CLEANTHES, are my unfeigned sentiments on this subject; and these sentiments, you know, I have ever cherished and maintained. But in proportion to my veneration for true religion, is my abhorrence of vulgar superstitions; and I indulge a peculiar pleasure, I confess, in pushing such principles, sometimes into absurdity, sometimes into impiety. And you are sensible, that all bigots, notwithstanding their great aversion to the latter above the former, are commonly equally guilty of both.

My inclination, replied CLEANTHES, lies, I own, a contrary way, Religion, however corrupted, is still better than no religion at all. The doctrine of a future state is so strong and necessary a security to morals, that we never ought to abandon or neglect it. For if finite and temporary rewards and punishments have so great an effect, as we daily find; how

Sceptic denies, that we lie under an absolute necessity, notwithstanding these difficulties, of thinking, and believing, and reasoning with regard to all kind of subjects, and even of frequently assenting with confidence and security. The only difference, then, between these sects, if they merit that name, is, that the Sceptic, from habit, caprice, or inclination, insists most on the difficulties; the Dogmatist, for like reasons, on the necessity.

much greater must be expected from such as are infinite and eternal?

How happens it then, said PHILO, if vulgar superstition be so salutary to society, that all history abounds so much with accounts of its pernicious consequences on public affairs? Factions, civil wars, persecutions, subversions of government, oppression, slavery; these are the dismal consequences which always attend its prevalency over the minds of men. If the religious spirit be ever mentioned in any historical narration, we are sure to meet afterwards with a detail of the miseries, which attend it. And no period of time can be happier or more prosperous, than those in which it is never regarded, or heard of.

The reason of this observation, replied CLEANTHES, is obvious. The proper office of religion is to regulate the heart of men, humanize their conduct, infuse the spirit of temperance, order, and obedience; and as its operation is silent, and only enforces the motives of morality and justice, it is in danger of being overlooked, and confounded with these other motives. When it distinguishes itself, and acts as a separate principle over men, it has departed from its proper

sphere, and has become only a cover to faction and ambition.

And so will all religion, said PHILO, except the philosophical and rational kind. Your reasonings are more easily eluded than my facts. The inference is not just, because finite and temporary rewards and punishments have so great influence, that therefore such as are infinite and eternal must have so much greater. Consider, I beseech you, the attachment, which we have to present things, and the little concern which we discover for objects, so remote and uncertain. When divines are declaiming against the common behaviour and conduct of the world, they always represent this principle as the strongest imaginable (which indeed it is) and describe almost all human kind as lying under the influence of it, and sunk into the deepest lethargy and unconcern about their religious interests. Yet these same divines, when they refute their speculative antagonists, suppose the motives of religion to be so powerful, that, without them, it were impossible for civil society to subsist; nor are they ashamed of so palpable a contradiction. It is certain, from experience, that the smallest grain of natural honesty and benevolence has more

effect on men's conduct, than the most pompous views suggested by theological theories and systems. A man's natural inclination works incessantly upon him; it is for ever present to the mind, and mingles itself with every view and consideration: whereas religious motives, where they act at all, operate only by starts and bounds; and it is scarcely possible for them to become altogether habitual to the mind. The force of the greatest gravity, say the philosophers, is infinitely small, in comparison of that of the least impulse; yet it is certain, that the smallest gravity will, in the end, prevail above a great impulse; because no strokes or blows can be repeated with such constancy as attraction and gravitation.

Another advantage of inclination: It engages on its side all the wit and ingenuity of the mind; and when set in opposition to religious principles, seeks every method and art of eluding them: in which it is almost always successful. Who can explain the heart of man, or account for those strange salvos and excuses, with which people satisfy themselves, when they follow their inclinations in opposition to their religious duty! This is well

understood in the world; and none but fools ever repose less trust in a man, because they hear, that, from study and philosophy, he has entertained some speculative doubts with regard to theological subjects. And when we have to do with a man, who makes a great profession of religion and devotion; has this any other effect upon several, who pass for prudent, than to put them on their guard, lest they be cheated and deceived by him?

We must farther consider, that philosophers, who cultivate reason and reflection, stand less in need of such motives to keep them under the restraint of morals; and that the vulgar, who alone may need them, are utterly incapable of so pure a religion, as represents the Deity to be pleased with nothing but virtue in human behaviour. The recommendations to the Divinity are generally supposed to be either frivolous observances, or rapturous ecstasies, or a bigoted credulity. We need not run back into antiquity, or wander into remote regions, to find instances of this degeneracy. Amongst ourselves, some have been guilty of that atrociousness, unknown to the EGYPTIAN and GRECIAN superstitions, of declaiming, in express terms, against morality,

and representing it as a sure forfeiture of the Divine favour, if the least trust or reliance be laid upon it.

But even though superstition or enthusiasm should not put itself in direct opposition to morality; the very diverting of the attention, the raising up a new and frivolous species of merit, the preposterous distribution, which it makes of praise and blame; must have the most pernicious consequences, and weaken extremely men's attachment to the natural motives of justice and humanity.

Such a principle of action likewise, not being any of the familiar motives of human conduct, acts only by intervals on the temper, and must be roused by continual efforts, in order to render the pious zealot satisfied with his own conduct, and make him fulfil his devotional task. Many religious exercises are entered into with seeming fervour, where the heart, at the time, feels cold and languid: A habit of dissimulation is by degrees contracted: and fraud and falsehood become the predominant principle. Hence the reason of that vulgar observation, that the highest zeal in religion and the deepest hypocrisy, so far from being inconsistent, are often or

commonly united in the same individual character.

The bad effects of such habits, even in common life, are easily imagined: but where the interests of religion are concerned, no morality can be forcible enough to bind the enthusiastic zealot. The sacredness of the cause sanctifies every measure, which can be made use of to promote it.

The steady attention alone to so important an interest as that of eternal salvation is apt to extinguish the benevolent affections, and beget a narrow, contracted selfishness. And when such a temper is encouraged, it easily eludes all the general precepts of charity and benevolence.

Thus the motives of vulgar superstition have no great influence on general conduct; nor is their operation very favourable to morality, in the instances where they predominate.

Is there any maxim in politics more certain and infallible, than that both the number and authority of priests should be confined within very narrow limits, and that the civil magistrate ought, for ever, to keep his *fascēs* and *axes* from such dangerous hands? But if the spirit of popular religion were so salu-

tary to society, a contrary maxim ought to prevail. The greater number of priests, and their greater authority and riches, will always augment the religious spirit. And though the priests have the guidance of this spirit, why may we not expect a superior sanctity of life, and greater benevolence and moderation, from persons who are set apart for religion, who are continually inculcating it upon others, and who must themselves imbibe a greater share of it? Whence comes it then, that in fact, the utmost a wise magistrate can propose with regard to popular religions, is, as far as possible, to make a saving game of it, and to prevent their pernicious consequences with regard to society? Every expedient which he tries for so humble a purpose is surrounded with inconveniences. If he admits only one religion among his subjects, he must sacrifice, to an uncertain prospect of tranquillity, every consideration of public liberty, science, reason, industry, and even his own independency. If he gives indulgence to several sects, which is the wiser maxim, he must preserve a very philosophical indifference to all of them, and carefully restrain the pretensions of the prevailing sect; otherwise he can expect nothing

but endless disputes, quarrels, factions, persecutions, and civil commotions.

True religion, I allow, has no such pernicious consequences: but we must treat of religion, as it has commonly been found in the world; nor have I any thing to do with that speculative tenet of Theism, which, as it is a species of philosophy, must partake of the beneficial influence of that principle, and at the same time must lie under a like inconvenience, of being always confined to very few persons.

Oaths are requisite in all courts of judicature; but it is a question whether their authority arises from any popular religion. 'Tis the solemnity and importance of the occasion, the regard to reputation, and the reflecting on the general interests of society, which are the chief restraints upon mankind. Custom-house oaths and political oaths are but little regarded even by some who pretend to principles of honesty and religion: and a Quaker's asseveration is with us justly put upon the same footing with the oath of any other person. I know, that POLYBIUS¹ ascribes the infamy of GREEK faith to the prevalency

¹ Lib. 6, cap. 54.

of the EPICUREAN philosophy; but I know also, that PUNIC faith had as bad a reputation in ancient times, as IRISH evidence has in modern; though we cannot account for these vulgar observations by the same reason. Not to mention, that GREEK faith was infamous before the rise of the EPICUREAN philosophy; and EURIPIDES,¹ in a passage which I shall point out to you, has glanced a remarkable stroke of satire against his nation, with regard to this circumstance.

Take care, PHILO, replied CLEANTHES, take care; push not matters too far: allow not your zeal against false religion to undermine your veneration for the true. Forfeit not this principle, the chief, the only great comfort in life; and our principal support amidst all the attacks of adverse fortune. The most agreeable reflection, which it is possible for human imagination to suggest, is that of genuine Theism, which represents us as the workmanship of a Being perfectly good, wise, and powerful; who created us for happiness, and who, having implanted in us immeasurable desires of good, will prolong our existence to all eternity, and will transfer us into

¹ Iphigenia in Tauride.

an infinite variety of scenes, in order to satisfy those desires, and render our felicity complete and durable. Next to such a Being himself (if the comparison be allowed) the happiest lot which we can imagine, is that of being under his guardianship and protection.

These appearances, said PHILO, are most engaging and alluring; and with regard to the true philosopher, they are more than appearances. But it happens here, as in the former case, that, with regard to the greater part of mankind, the appearances are deceitful, and that the terrors of religion commonly prevail above its comforts.

It is allowed, that men never have recourse to devotion so readily as when dejected with grief or depressed with sickness. Is not this a proof, that the religious spirit is not so nearly allied to joy as to sorrow?

But men, when afflicted, find consolation in religion, replied CLEANTHES. Sometimes, said PHILO: but it is natural to imagine, that they will form a notion of those unknown beings, suitably to the present gloom and melancholy of their temper, when they betake themselves to the contemplation of them. Accordingly, we find the tremendous

images to predominate in all religions; and we ourselves, after having employed the most exalted expressions in our descriptions of the Deity, fall into the flattest contradiction, in affirming, that the damned are infinitely superior in number to the elect.

I shall venture to affirm, that there never was a popular religion, which represented the state of departed souls in such a light, as would render it eligible for human kind, that there should be such a state. These fine models of religion are the mere product of philosophy. For as death lies between the eye and the prospect of futurity, that event is so shocking to Nature, that it must throw a gloom on all the regions which lie beyond it; and suggest to the generality of mankind the idea of CERBERUS and FURIES; devils, and torrents of fire and brimstone.

It is true; both fear and hope enter into religion; because both these passions, at different times, agitate the human mind, and each of them forms a species of divinity, suitable to itself. But when a man is in a cheerful disposition, he is fit for business or company or entertainment of any kind; and he naturally applies himself to these, and thinks

not of religion. When melancholy, and dejected, he has nothing to do but brood upon the terrors of the invisible world, and to plunge himself still deeper in affliction. It may, indeed, happen, that after he has, in this manner, engraved the religious opinions deep into his thought and imagination, there may arrive a change of health or circumstances, which may restore his good humour, and raising cheerful prospects of futurity, make him run into the other extreme of joy and triumph. But still it must be acknowledged, that, as terror is the primary principle of religion, it is the passion, which always predominates in it, and admits but of short intervals of pleasure.

Not to mention, that these fits of excessive, enthusiastic joy, by exhausting the spirits, always prepare the way for equal fits of superstitious terror and dejection; nor is there any state of mind so happy as the calm and equable. But this state it is impossible to support, where a man thinks that he lies in such profound darkness and uncertainty, between an eternity of happiness and an eternity of misery. No wonder, that such an opinion disjoins the ordinary frame of the mind, and throws it into the utmost

confusion. And though that opinion is seldom so steady in its operation as to influence all the actions; yet it is apt to make a considerable breach in the temper, and to produce that gloom and melancholy, so remarkable in all devout people.

It is contrary to common sense to entertain apprehensions or terrors, upon account of any opinion whatsoever, or to imagine that we run any risk hereafter, by the freest use of our reason. Such a sentiment implies both an *absurdity* and an *inconsistency*. It is an absurdity to believe that the Deity has human passions, and one of the lowest of human passions, a restless appetite for applause. It is an inconsistency to believe, that, since the Deity has this human passion, he has not others also; and, in particular, a disregard to the opinions of creatures so much inferior.

To know God, says Seneca, is to worship him. All other worship is indeed absurd, superstitious, and even impious. It degrades Him to the low condition of mankind, who are delighted with entreaty, solicitation, presents, and flattery. Yet is this impiety the smallest of which superstition is guilty. Commonly,

it depresses the Deity far below the condition of mankind; and represents him as a capricious dæmon, who exercises his power without reason and without humanity! And were that divine Being disposed to be offended at the vices and follies of silly mortals, who are his own workmanship; ill would it surely fare with the votaries of most popular superstitions. Nor would any of human race merit his *favour*, but a very few, the philosophical Theists, who entertain, or rather indeed endeavour to entertain, suitable notions of his divine perfections: as the only persons entitled to his *compassion* and *indulgence* would be the philosophical Sceptics, a sect almost equally rare, who, from a natural diffidence of their own capacity, suspend, or endeavour to suspend all judgment with regard to such sublime and such extraordinary subjects.

If the whole of Natural Theology, as some people seem to maintain, resolves itself into one simple, though somewhat ambiguous, at least undefined proposition, *That the cause or causes of order in the universe probably bear some remote analogy to human intelligence*: If this proposition be not capable of extension, variation, or more particular explication: If

it afford no inference that affects human life, or can be the source of any action or forbearance: And if the analogy, imperfect as it is, can be carried no farther than to the human intelligence; and cannot be transferred, with any appearance of probability, to the other qualities of the mind: If this really be the case, what can the most inquisitive, contemplative, and religious man do more than give a plain, philosophical assent to the proposition, as often as it occurs; and believe that the arguments, on which it is established, exceed the objections, which lie against it? Some astonishment indeed will naturally arise from the greatness of the object: Some melancholy from its obscurity: Some contempt of human reason, that it can give no solution more satisfactory with regard to so extraordinary and magnificent a question. But believe me, CLEANTHES, the most natural sentiment, which a well-disposed mind will feel on this occasion, is a longing desire and expectation, that heaven would be pleased to dissipate, at least alleviate, this profound ignorance, by affording some more particular revelation to mankind, and making discoveries of the nature, attributes, and operations of the

divine object of our faith. A person, seasoned with a just sense of the imperfections of natural reason, will fly to revealed truth with the greatest avidity: While the haughty Dogmatist, persuaded that he can erect a complete system of Theology by the mere help of philosophy, disdains any farther aid, and rejects this adventitious instructor. To be a philosophical Sceptic is, in a man of letters, the first and most essential step towards being a sound, believing Christian; a proposition which I would willingly recommend to the attention of PAMPHILUS: And I hope CLEANTHES will forgive me for interposing so far in the education and instruction of his pupil.

CLEANTHES and PHILO pursued not this conversation much farther; and as nothing ever made greater impression on me, than all the reasonings of that day; so I confess, that, upon a serious review of the whole, I cannot but think that PHILO's principles are more probable than DEMEA's; but that those of CLEANTHES approach still nearer to the truth.

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